

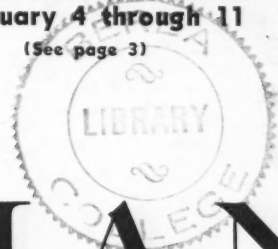
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v. 11, No. 4

The
HIGH SCHOOL

THESPIAN

OBSERVE NATIONAL DRAMA WEEK
February 4 through 11

(See page 3)



VOL. XI, No. 4

A National Publication Devoted to Dramatics in the Secondary Schools

35c Per Copy

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DRAMATICS!**

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**INSTALLATION OF TROUPE
NO. 400 AT GREEN-
FIELD, OHIO**

FEBRUARY, 1940



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FACTS ABOUT THE

THESPIAN PLAY OF THE YEAR

THE GHOST OF MR. PENNY

By Rosemary G. Musil, author of "Seven Little Rebels"

1. This play was not submitted to the Thespian Playwriting Contest, and so was not eligible for the Thespian Cup. But the Advisers of The Children's Theatre Press felt that this was a play of Cup calibre, and that it qualified in every respect for Thespian production. It is therefore included in the Thespian Series, and is published as the Thespian Play of 1939.
2. The premiere production of this play was given in March, 1939, by the Children's Theatre of Northwestern University, under the direction of Miss Winifred Ward.
3. This is a mystery play, with highlights of irresistible comedy. It plays about two hours, needs two sets, and eight characters.
4. Synopsis: A little girl named Sally, whose parentage is unknown, is dismayed to learn that she must go to an orphan asylum. Putting on a brave front, she joins her friends for a last romp in the abandoned stable of the old Penny estate. In the stable, the children discover a jolly and easy-going tramp,

who has climbed in there to spend the night. Sally's nimble imagination at once conceives him to be the long-lost Mr. Penny, and with the aid of a little circumstantial evidence, she soon persuades her friends to accept him as Mr. Penny too.

Late that night, they all creep into the big old Penny house, to help "Mr. Penny" recover the hidden treasure with which Sally's imagination has provided him. There follows a highly comical scene, in which the custodian of the house thinks the children are ghosts, the children think the tramp is a ghost, and unexpected occurrences make everybody's hair stand on end. They find no treasure, but "Mr. Penny" finds a paper establishing Sally's family connections, and the next morning, when Sally is about to be taken off to the orphan asylum, it is "Mr. Penny" who saves the day.

5. Books are priced at 75c each. On all orders of twelve books or more, there is a discount of five percent.
6. Royalty is \$15.00 for each performance.

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The High School Thespian will welcome at any time articles, news items, pictures, or any other material of interest in the field of high school dramatics. Manuscripts and photographs submitted for publication must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelope. Not responsible for unsolicited materials.

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FEBRUARY, 1940

THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

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1. Scene from *GROWING PAINS* as staged by Miles S. McLain at Middletown, N. Y., High School (Troupe No. 74). 2. Scene from the play, *CANDLE-LIGHT*, given by Troupe No. 322 at Clayton, Mo., High School. 3. The duel scene in *JAZZ AND MINUET* as presented by Brookings, S. D., High School. 4. Max Coan in the play, *TAPS*, as staged by members of Troupe No. 142 of Bloomington, Ind., High School. Directed by Mrs. Laura G. Childs. 5. Cast for the play, *THE TOWER ROOM MYSTERY*, staged by E. J. Ryan at Burley, Idaho, High School (Troupe No. 111). 6. Prize winner in the seventh annual Model Stage Contest sponsored by Troupe No. 306 at Trinity High School, River Forest, Ill. 7. Best Thespian Barton Walton of Troupe No. 308 at Darien, Conn., High School. 8. "Topsy" in *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN*, a production of Troupe No. 354 at Penn High School, Greenville, Pa. 9. Thespians operating public address system at Robbinsdale, Minn., Senior High School. 10. Abe Lincoln and Ann Rutledge in *PROLOGUE TO GLORY* as played by students of Thespian Troupe No. 256 at Twin Falls, Idaho, High School. Directed by Florence M. Rees. 11. Scene from *GROWING PAINS* as given by Troupe No. 333 at Burlington, Wash., High School. Patricia Ryan, director.

National Drama Week Occasion For Installation of Thespian Troupe No. 400 at Greenfield, Ohio



Named after Edward Lee McClain, industrialist and philanthropist, the McClain Troupe (No. 400) of The National Thespian Dramatic Honor Society for High Schools will be formally installed on the evening of February 5 at the McClain High School, Greenfield, Ohio. Sixty students will form the charter roll of the new troupe which will be sponsored by Mr. Wylie Fetherlin. Shown in the picture above are students, members of the Board of Education, and school officials who will participate in the installation ceremony.

NATIONAL Drama Week is always an occasion for much rejoicing among high school dramatics groups affiliated with The National Thespian Society. For this year's celebration, which will be observed February 4 through 11, Thespians everywhere are making plans for the purpose of focusing attention to the important contributions which dramatics and all other phases of speech work make to the educational development of our boys and girls in the secondary schools.

The spotlight in this year's observance will turn to the McClain High School of Greenfield, Ohio, where, amid much jubilation and solemnity, Thespian Troupe No. 400 will be formally installed at a public ceremony scheduled for 8:00 p. m., Monday, February 5. In charge of the ceremony will be Mr. Wylie Fetherlin, who has the distinction of being one of the first dramatics directors to join The National Thespian Society at the time of its founding early in the spring of 1929. In reply to our request for an account of his plans for this ceremony, Mr. Fetherlin has sent us the following interesting information:

"During the past several weeks we have spent much time in completing our plans for the formal installation and unveiling of our Thespian Charter at a public ceremony on the night of February 5. Our program, to which Thespians everywhere are cordially invited, will be as follows:

Presentation of visiting Thespians, school officials, etc.

B. R. Duckworth....Superintendent of Schools

"We Are Thespians Now"

Betty Blaine '40.....Troupe Treasurer

"The Thespian Ideal"

James Daniels '40.....Troupe President

To Thespians Everywhere:

DRAMATICS has always occupied an important place in our curriculum at McClain High School, probably due to worthy and very capable directors. This year there seems to be a very unusual interest in dramatics and speech arts; classes are very much larger, and there is an enthusiasm to enact more plays. This is due to a large extent to our director, Mr. Fetherlin. Although this is his first year at McClain, he comes to us with several years of experience, highly qualified, and recommended. Under his supervision and direction, two plays, *Be Yourself* and *Miss Jimmy*, were staged in our auditorium this semester and were enthusiastically received by the students and public. This demonstrated what a capable director can do with amateurs.

The primary purpose of our schools is to promote the democratic way of life. Pupils who participate in dramatics are, in most cases, not expecting to follow the stage as a career, but they will have the experience of both actor and spectator, thereby being better equipped to promote a better and a more critical theater and movie-going public.

School administrators of today are stressing pupil activity in our schools; pupils learn by doing. To realize this objective, we must have a dynamic and life-centered curriculum. Where in our curriculum could we find a more fertile spot to develop this ideal than in speech and dramatics?

Our affiliation with The National Thespian Society is a step forward to further the growth of dramatics in our school and community. Each member who has the honor and privilege to belong to this organization should sense a deep responsibility in carrying out its aims and purposes. Members of McClain Troupe No. 400 will strive to live up to its pledge.

C. E. BOOHER, Principal,
McClain High School, Greenfield, Ohio.

Oath to Honorary Members

Carolyn Dwyer '40.....Troupe Secretary

Presentation of Certificates to Charter Members

Wylie Fetherlin.....Troupe Sponsor

Unveiling and Presentation of Charter

Herschel Riley '41.....Troupe Treasurer-elect

"Acceptance"

C. E. Booher.....High School Principal

"We Plan Our Future As Thespians"

Robert Emery '41.....Troupe President-elect

"Let's Choose a Play"

(The audience will select one of three plays it wishes to see.)

Jane Drake.....Troupe Secretary-elect

Intermission—Music

Presentation of the one-act play selected by "the house"

"In appreciation of their continued and enthusiastic support of dramatics as an instrument of value in the educational process, our troupe will award honorary membership to Mr. Duckworth, Mr. Booher, Mr. Maurice Allen, business manager, Mr. George Willett, chief custodian, and Mrs. Edward Lee McClain, widow of the donor of the high school to our community. Because our Board of Education is actively interested in worthwhile school activities of which Speech is a prominent part, the Troupe will also award honorary membership to Mr. Walter Skeen, President of the Board, Mr. John Davis, Mr. Robert Irvine, Mr. Clarence Fox, and Mr. H. H. Limes."

Mr. Fetherlin, himself a native of Greenfield, Ohio, has this to say about his home-town high school and his associations with The National Thespian Society:

"In 1914, while Europe was engaged in destroying its visions, Edward Lee Mc-

(Continued on page 8)

BROADWAY AT A GLANCE

by MARGARET WENTWORTH

Life With Father

NO DOUBT, some of us, those who loved the book, *Life With Father*, were half afraid to see it as a play but there is no occasion for the feeling. It is amusing, genial, tender, delightfully done. It exemplifies Oliver Wendell Holmes couplet:

"Learn the brief moral of our evening's play.
Man has his will; but Woman has her way."

For all his "big—big D's" father is wax in mother's deft hands; he wins battles but loses the war. The action passes in the Days' morning room in their home on Madison Avenue and the time is in the late 1880's. Father, mother, and the four Day boys are all redheads. Father and mother are husband and wife off the stage for Dorothy Stickney is Mrs. Howard Lindsay, who not only enacts father but who was one of the adapters of the play. John Drew Devereaux plays Clarence, the eldest of the four boys.

Clarence Day suffered from arthritis for years before his death but defied anyone to offer him sympathy, much less pity. His widow aided in staging the play and lent many authentic properties.

The World We Make

Sidney Kingsley stopped producing after the failure of his anti-war play, *Ten Million Ghosts*, two years ago. Now he is back with a dramatization of Millen Brand's *The Outward Room* which he has renamed *The World We Make*. It is a moving drama of a mind which finds itself. The heroine, played by Margo, was in an automobile accident in which her brother was killed and blames her parents for his death. Since the accident she has lived in the past but at the beginning of the play the doctor who has been treating her, has decided that she is able to leave the sanitarium and try to take up life again. She refuses to go with her parents but runs away and gets a job in a laundry. She cannot hold it, because of her physical weakness but is befriended by a young workman who takes her home to his rooms as impersonally as he would have taken a boy. In the crowded tenement she comes back to living in the present through work done for someone else, through friendship, love and sympathy. The doctor tells her that we all have to make our own worlds and encourages her to marry the man she loves and go forward without fear into the world they will make together. Well acted, skillfully directed by Mr. Kingsley himself and carrying a message of cheer, it merits the success it is having.

Morning's at Seven

The Theatre Guild is uniting with

Dwight Deere Wiman to present *Morning's at Seven*, by Paul Osborn. Less engaging than his *On Borrowed Time*, it is still faithful to life and has a certain wistful charm besides its hearty humor. It concerns four sisters, three of whom are married, and the action passes on the back stoops and in the yards of two of them. One sister married an ex-college professor who despises the rest of the family as morons and will have nothing to do with them. The unmarried sister lives with one of the sisters who resents her presence, wishing to be alone with her husband. It's quite true most of the characters are moronic but they win our sympathy in spite of that. Dorothy Gish plays the old maid sister whose sharp attention to the lives of the others is excused by her having had no real life of her own; Effie Shannon is the wife of the proud professor who is portrayed by Herbert Yost. The portrait of Grandpa and Gran'ma in *On Borrowed Time* showed Mr. Osborn's interest in an understanding of old age; here most of his characters are over sixty and still have their problems.

Farm of Three Echoes

Ethel Barrymore is back as an old, old woman in *Farm of Three Echoes*, a play with a South African locale. The echoes are the evil, haunting influences of men who have been cruel to their wives and the heir to the farm (Dean Jagger) is afraid to marry for fear their blood will stir in him. However, a simple girl, hardly more than a child, wins him back to normality. The eerie atmosphere on which the play depends has to be created by Miss Barrymore and she makes cold chills run down your spine merely by the modulations of her voice. In this make-up her resemblance to Lionel is very marked. She has all the mannerisms of age, its forgetfulness and repetition, its sharp suspicion, if any of its rights and privileges are invaded. The reviewers have made much of the fact that she has kept her coffin on hand for many years and sometimes sleeps in it; as I spent two years in China where no finer gift can be made to a parent of any age than a handsome coffin, it seemed less strange to me. In a hot

climate a long trip to town for a coffin was inadvisable; and Ouma (Miss Barrymore's title in the play) did not intend to have Death call without her being ready for him.

Very Warm for May

Kern and Hammerstein have had so many outstanding successes together that when they confection a musical which is merely pleasing like *Very Warm for May* it is received coldly. It's true there's no hit song you come out whistling; but it has a good cast and provides an amusing evening.

New Pins and Needles

The *New Pins and Needles* opens the play's third year on Broadway. Since the revue is largely topical, many of the skits had become outmoded. It now contains a satire on Clifford Odets, a satire on radio, a sketch called *The Red Mikado*, a take-off on different versions of the Gilbert and Sullivan work, and two very apt numbers, *Stay Out*, *Sammy*, a mother warning her boy to play on his own side of the street and not become involved in war, and *The Harmony Boys*, a take-off on Kuhn, Coughlin, and Reynolds. They have retained such favorites as *Five Little Angels of Peace* and *Sunday in the Park*. This propaganda is all the more effective because it is sly and good-humored, not bitter nor wholly one-sided.

Swingin' the Dream

Swingin' the Dream is a gargantuan rendering of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in terms of Swing. Not modern Swing, however, but Swing at what is alleged to have been its time and place of birth, New Orleans in 1890. The huge stage of the Centre Theatre is hidden under fantastic scenery done after Walt Disney's cartoons. Enormous flowers bloom everywhere, half hiding the old Southern mansion in the background. In the second act the characters are taken to The Voodoo Wood, where tree-trunks writhe and look so enchanted that you're not at all surprised when one opens and a couch for Titania rolls onto the stage. Benny Goodman is on hand with his sextet and his inspired clarinet; Louis Armstrong plays Bottom and his trumpet; there is Bud Freeman and his *Summa cum Laude* group which inspires the pun, "summer come louder;" there are the Rhythmettes, the Deep River Boys and there seems to be half Harlem engaging in jitterbug antics. For the cast is chiefly colored, only the small group of the three pairs of lovers and their friends being white.

Devotees of Swing will have the time of their lives. Conservative people should see it in order to get some idea of this sort of music and dancing which is exercising such an influence on the younger generation. The chief criticism of it is that it offers little or no contrast. All colors are bright, all sounds loud; ears and eyes look for a spot of rest and find none.

NATIONAL DRAMA WEEK TO BE OBSERVED ON NATION-WIDE BROADCAST

Cooperating with amateur dramatic groups, school and college drama departments, and commercial theatres, the National Broadcasting Company will dedicate the broadcast of Boucicault's *ARRAH-NA-POGUE* on Sunday, February 4 (2:00-3:00 p. m., E.S.T.) to the observance of National Drama Week.



Scene from the play, *INDEPENDENCE ROCK*, an original drama of the early West written and produced by Miss Beulah Bayless, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 1 at Natrona County High School, Casper, Wyoming.

You Have Talent in Dramatics!

The First in a Series of Four Articles on Occupational Information for High School Students with Talent in Dramatics.*

by FRANCES WEAVER

Thespian Troupe Sponsor, Oceanside, New York, High School

YES, you have ability. You and your teachers have discovered it—and now you want to know what to do with it.

Of course there are a few jobs or professions in the world that can't be performed just a little bit better (all other factors being equal) by a person who has your talents. Everyone admires and is influenced by a pleasant voice, well-chosen words, a command of English, oral or written, and an expressive personality. To begin with, then, you have a gift that will prove an asset toward bringing about success in almost any undertaking.

There is, however, a danger that goes along with the gift. You are likely to be a little bit queer. If you are inclined toward creative writing, you may find yourself in a dream world where nothing matters but your creations. If you are an actor, you may be nervous, sensitive and emotional. In either case you are temperamental. Yes, you smile and feel complimented, because you have a certain love for these little characteristics that have always set you apart from the crowd. Beware of them! They may be obstacles in your path. Until you have learned to master yourself, you will be unable to reap the benefits of your efforts. You will never be completely free and able to express *yourself* and "live your own life" until you can control yourself.

Your specific ability is a primary requisite to success in all the professions I shall discuss in this series of articles. However, there are certain character traits that should accompany this ability. Dramatic work demands enthusiasm, vitality, determination and untiring effort. It is not well to ask about number of hours, days off, length of vacation and amount of remuneration. All of these things will depend upon you, in the final analysis. To begin with, you should show what you have that the other fellow doesn't have. Arthur Brisbane was not mourned and honored at his death because he was a columnist, but because he was Arthur Brisbane. He died successful, noted and wealthy not because he was a columnist, but because he read and read and thought and wrote and rewrote until people clamored for his ideas. Cornelia Otis Skinner and Helen Hayes are not great because they have dramatic ability (thousands have that), but because they have done something *with* that ability that few others have done.

If you become discouraged easily, are inclined to be acquiescently envious; if you wonder long and hard and morbidly why someone else got something that you didn't, perhaps you should not try to earn your living through the speech arts; if you believe fervently in "breaks" and "pull," take my advice and don't enter the speech arts field. Things are moving too fast. You haven't time to *wait* for a break. You will have to make one

for yourself, if none seem to be coming your way. Lucky for all of us, there *are* breaks; but the lucky fellow is the one who is ready for his break when it comes. Then, too, it is often helpful to know the "right people," but the "right people" are looking just as hard for you as you are for them. Do something; be active in every way it is possible for you to be active along your line. Make yourself heard and felt, by meeting needs in hundreds of situations even though no one is willing to pay you. After that, it won't be long until *your* friends will number among *their* friends, the "right people."

Discipline yourself, have a bottomless well of energy, believe in the good in people, and your ability plus these will help to bring true your ardent dreams.

The First Steps

If you are inclined to be the least bit cautious or conservative; if you believe a steady income is necessary to happiness; if you lack an adventurous spirit, don't go any further toward a career in professional dramatics. The information that follows will be of value only to those who have boundless enthusiasm and an insatiable desire to become associated with the theatre.

It is very difficult to find a place in the theatre. Until recently it was almost a closed field. If you live in New York and your parents or close friends were actors, you had a chance; if not, you were defeated at the start. Today if you are "really good," it is possible to rise on your own merits.

An opening wedge is a good college or university course. Valuable training and experience may be gained in almost any school, but the following are among those that have trained men and women who have contributed materially to the field of the drama:

* The material contained in this and succeeding articles was prepared originally for the Department of Personnel, School of Education, New York University. —Editor.



Typical of the excellent private schools of drama in the country is the Schuster-Martin School of the Drama of Cincinnati, Ohio, where many high school graduates continue their training for radio, stage and screen careers. Shown in the picture above is the stage set for Elizabeth McFadden's drama, *DOUBLE DOOR*, as staged by students of the Schuster-Martin School of the Drama.

University of Washington.....Seattle, Wash.
Yale School of Dramatics.....New Haven, Conn.
University of Michigan.....Ann Arbor, Mich.
Syracuse University.....Syracuse, N. Y.
American Academy of
Dramatic Art.....Carnegie Hall, N. Y. C.
Northwestern University.....Evanston, Ill.
University of Denver.....Denver, Colo.
Carnegie Institute of Technology.....Pittsburgh, Pa.
University of Wisconsin.....Madison, Wis.
Univ. of So. Cal. Univ. Park, Los Angeles, Cal.
Pasadena Playhouse.....Pasadena, Cal.
New York University.....New York, N. Y.
Columbia University.....New York, N. Y.

Of course this list does not include all of the good schools; there are many others.

Merely taking the prescribed course in a dramatic school will in no way insure you of a position in the professional theatre. You must get actual experience. Most of the large universities have repertory groups, that include university students and others as well. At New York University this group is called Washington Square College Players; at Columbia, Morningside Players; at University of Michigan, the Michigan Repertory Players; several colleges in Ohio send students to the Cleveland Playhouse.

Summer stock companies, summer theatres, and the very recent innovation, "The Cowbarn," all offer opportunity to gain experience. It is difficult to obtain actual positions with these, but most of them offer courses and if you are clever you can make yourself useful and learn at the same time. According to a newspaper account, the Washington Irving Theatre in North Tarrytown, New York, was badly in need of help at the time of the 1938 opening. The stage manager had to enlist the aid of his mother, sister, and the maid in order to get the theatre ready for the opening performance.

SUMMER THEATRES NEAR NEW YORK
Southampton Playhouse....Southampton, L. I.
Provincetown Players....Provincetown, Mass.

Westport County Playhouse...Westport, Conn.
Berkshire County Playhouse...Wingdale, N. Y.
County Theatre.....Suffern, N. Y.
Keene Summer Theatre.....Keene, N. H.
Peterborough Players

.....Stearns Farm, Peterborough, N. H.
Mohawk Drama Festival...Schenectady, N. Y.
Tamarack Playhouse.....Lake Pleasant, N. Y.
Red Barn.....Locust Valley, N. Y.

There are dozens of others and you may secure their names by consulting the drama page of any metropolitan newspaper.

If you can't afford to take a course, or to vacation at a resort where a summer theatre exists, wait on table, mow lawns, do anything that will make it possible for you to meet the people in charge. Offer your services for sewing, carpentering, electrical work, prompting, call boy, errand boy. Take any task, no matter how menial. You should grasp every opportunity to make your ability known and to secure experience in every phase of theatrical work.

There is no doubt about the fact that the theatre itself is the *very best* school. If it is at all possible to get in directly, by all means do so. The above suggestions are for the vast army of talented young men and women who need assistance and for those whose talent needs guidance and development.

NATIONAL THESPIAN PLAYWRITING CONTEST

Manuscripts are now being received for the National Thespian Playwriting Contest, sponsored again this year by The Children's Theatre Press, of Charleston, W. Va. If the winning play is recommended for publication by the judges, the playwright will receive a silver loving cup, and his play will be known as the Thespian Play of the Year.

The contest closes May 30, 1940. For further details write The Contest Editor, The Children's Theatre Press.

Perhaps money is a major problem and you feel that you could not finance a regular four-year course. Do not lose heart. Observation and study of biography will show that success is reached many times not because of *ideal situations*, but in *spite of* adverse ones.

Even though your finances are low, a college course is within your reach, if you can make arrangements to be freed from family responsibilities for four years. Numerous state and city institutions are supported through public funds, and require no tuition. You may eliminate the board and room problem if you live at home or with friends. It is desirable to take advantage of every summer vacation. Secure employment along the line of your major interest, if possible. However, any experience will be tremendously valuable and it may pay enough to make the winter easier.

Scholarships have never been as plentiful or as easy to get as they are today. If your high school record is good and you show above average ability, your high school principal and teachers will do everything in their power to secure one for you. The *Student Aid* magazine, published in Poughkeepsie, New York, gives detailed information concerning scholarships and other forms of student aid. *College and University Scholarships*, by H. E. Raffen-sperger, is an excellent book giving information on scholarships, loan funds, fellowships and student self-help offered by the leading colleges in the United States. It is published by the New Era Teachers Service, Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania.

Yes, if you have ability, if you aren't afraid of long hours, if you have plenty of enthusiasm, and are not easily discouraged, there is every reason to believe that you will have success in some phase of dramatic work.

(The second article in this series will appear in our March issue.)

"Projecting It Over the Foots"

By MIRIAM A. FRANKLIN

Director for the Division of Speech, Grove City College, Grove City, Pa.

THE best actors encounter serious problems. Occasionally they do not recognize the problems to be difficult and as a result do not overcome them adequately.

Not long ago we were presenting the play, *Our Town*, by Thornton Wilder. It is one of those plays which has everything: story, suspense, beauty, pathos, interesting characterization, romance, and all the rest. The cast worked enthusiastically, and with their enthusiasm came a feeling-into the emotions of the play. At the appointed time everything seemed to be ready.

The first night came. The audience was ideal. They responded with smiles or tears or sighs exactly in the mood of the play as it progressed. Then something happened! With this stimulus of the ideal audience response, the players felt more deeply, and then instinctively stepped-up the play in emotion. The happy scenes become lighter, brighter, livelier; and in the serious scenes players' voices became softer, quieter, more filled with feeling. The result: some lines could not be heard.

The difficulty was due not to lowered voices but to inadequate projection of voices. A voice may be low and quiet on stage as well as off, but speech *must* be clear and distinct.

To make the play—everything about the play—project to those sitting in the back row is often a baffling problem. You, as players, will wish to fully project your voices, the important action, your emotional expression—in fact, everything that the audience is entitled to have. This is your responsibility.

We are all creatures of instinct. In real life instinct governs the way we act and move and speak. You can easily make your chum fifty rods away hear your speech even out-of-doors. You use adequate voice, careful, distinct speech, and broader gestures. Because the theatre is large (and sometimes it has bad acoustic qualities) you must project the play also, and in a similar way. Those watching the play from the last row should understand it with the same clearness that the chum understood you.

Projecting the lines is perhaps most important. Difficulty with them can be overcome by *clearness of tone and distinctness of speech*. Although there must be a *push* on the words, there is no need for a loud voice. Nor do listeners need to hear every "to" and "of" and "for" and "the". Not at all. Since the weak forms of articles, prepositions, conjunctions and pronouns are used in good taste by our best speakers, you need not hesitate to use them.

This is the fourth in a series of seven articles by Miss Franklin on acting techniques for high school students. The fifth article will appear in the March issue. Miss Franklin is the author of the new textbook, *Rehearsal* (Prentice-Hall), which we recommend to all teachers and students active in dramatics.—EDITOR.

"The horse" with "th' horse;" "Mary and John" will be "Mary 'nd John;" "of him" becomes "of 'im," etc. If you use strong forms of all words, your speech will probably sound stilted and bookish.

On the other hand, two-syllable words have no weak forms, and their last syllables are too often slighted, as are also the final consonants of many syllables and words. When "candle" is spoken, it should not sound like "can;" nor "barber" like "bar". "Can you go?" is too often "cayou go?"; "I don't think I'd better" may become "I don't thin' I be'r."

Carelessness in dropping sounds is no more pronounced on the stage than it is off, but it is more objectionable. In the theatre we want to hear all; while in real life we may be less interested, or we can ask the speaker to repeat. Remember not loudness but enough voice plus distinctness; this is your formula. You may speak as rapidly as you like, provided you can speak distinctly and provided you phrase lines carefully. Tempo doesn't matter if you slice the words apart and separate the phrases.

Some "Don'ts" may help you to remember.

Don't mumble and swallow your sounds.
Don't race so fast that some words fall down and become trampled.

Don't run words together (although you may), and you should use contractions, *they're, hasn't, I'm* and the like.

Here are some "Do's."

Do phrase all lines.

Do make some words stand out more prominently.

Do use weak forms of the less important words.

Do bring out final syllables.

Observe these principles and keep thinking subconsciously, "I'm talking to you in the last row. I'm talking to you in the last row," and you will find that even your stage whisper will carry over.

But speech is not the only part of a play that must be projected. If it were all-important, you might read your play over a public address system and save the trouble of memorizing the lines and acting before the audience. Feelings, actions, effects, facial expressions must also be fully projected.

There are actions in some plays upon which real significance depends. Action often tells much of the story. Such action must be pointed-up. It must be made

conspicuous. In *Two Crooks and a Lady*, by Eugene Pillot, Miller steals a gold stamp box from the writing desk. If those in the audience are to see this significant action, Miller must exaggerate it so that *nobody can help seeing it*. In *The Rear Car*, by Edward E. Rose, a very important envelope is shyly passed from one character to another. In *Spooks*, by Robert J. Sherman, the licking of the seal on the envelope is very important. Two women in Susan Glaspell's *Trifles* make a desperate attempt to hide quickly the dead canary. The audience must see them *try* to hide it. The action in each of these scenes is very significant. Players cannot give it just as people act in real life, or the audience would miss seeing it and its significance to the play would be lost.

Every good play is woven about emotions. These are the foundation posts of all drama. If the joy, sadness, apprehension, fear, love, mirth, anger, written into the play is not projected, there will be little left of a play but dialogue. These feelings, be they slight or intense, must be expressed through the eyes, the face, the voice, and the body of the actor. The theatre is large. Although Toni and Paul speaking together on the stage may stand only four feet apart where they can easily see the expressions on the other's face, nevertheless those in the back of the hall cannot see unless each player in expressing emotion makes the facial expressions or bodily movements pronounced enough and holds them long enough for the audience to get them.

The pause is probably the most important means of projecting emotions. When a surprise comes, you should listen to it, or look at it, then pause. A long-lost friend turns up; a telegram comes announcing a death; a lovely gift is presented to you; a companion makes a bitter remark; your employer dismisses you; or a woman strikes your face. You will project the effectiveness of any of these better if you follow each with a pause.

Facial expressions and an expressive body are essential in projecting emotion. The muscles in the hands, slight movements of the feet, the eyebrows, the jaws, the lips, and particularly the eyes, can reveal more than words. Your movements need not be large; in fact they should not be. But you must often take them suddenly and hold them to tell how your character feels. Feeling shown in the body and face will project to the audience emotion which speech cannot voice.

Most beginning actors are inclined to under-play the emotional scenes. These players should not exaggerate. However, there are some who over-play. I urge you who are inclined to over-play to use restraint. You should project lines without shouting them; project emotions and feelings without screwing your face or body into contortions, or using your voice to tie in knots the nerves of sensitive listeners.

When you have learned to play as well



Scene from the premiere production of George Savage and John McRae's latest play, *HE WHO HESITATES*, as produced by members of Thespian Troupe No. 374 at The Dalles, Ore., High School. Directed by Albert C. Hingston.

to the back rows as to the front rows, you will have taken a real step forward in acting. And remember, when you are assigned to a role filled with sadness, you may allow your voice to drop lower, but you must keep projecting speech and feeling. You will then save yourself the experience that the *Our Town* players had.

In the scene from *Lady Windermere's Fan* strive to fully project all lines even though some of them are little louder than a whisper. The babel of voices and the laughter of the guests fill the room. The lines of speakers must project above this background confusion. The action with the fan, handing it to Lord Darlington and dropping it to the floor, is quite significant and should be carefully projected.

LADY WINDERMERE'S FAN

BY OSCAR WILDE

A ball in honor of Lady Windermere's birthday is being held. Men and women stand and talk in groups about the drawing-room. At the entrance Lady Windermere is receiving the guests as they enter.

Parker: Mr. Cecil Graham!

Cecil Graham: (*Bows to LADY WINDERMERE, passes over and shakes hands with LORD WINDERMERE.*) Good evening, Arthur. Tuppy! Hear you're going to be married again; thought you were tired of that game.

Lord Augustus: You're excessively trivial, my dear boy, excessively trivial!

Cecil Graham: By the way, Tuppy, which is it? Have you been twice married and once divorced, or twice divorced and once married? I say, you've been twice divorced and once married. It seems so much more probable.

Lord Augustus: I have a very bad memory. I really don't remember which. (*Moves away R.*)

Lady Plymdale: Lord Windermere, I've something most particular to ask you.

Lord Windermere: I am afraid—if you will excuse me—I must join my wife.

Lady Plymdale: Oh, you mustn't dream of

such a thing. It's most dangerous nowadays for a husband to pay any attention to his wife in public. It always makes people think that he beats her when they're alone. The world has grown so suspicious of anything

Installation of Troupe No. 400

(Continued from page 3)

Clain was engaged in constructing the realization of his vision. He planned, erected, and gave to his community the most beautiful high school 'for the greatest good to the greatest number.' Bearing his name, the school is now a monument to him and to his vision.

"During the decade in which I have been associated with The National Thespian Society, I have been impressed with the manner in which Thespians have been encouraged to live its motto on the school stage and in later life: 'Act well your part, there all honor lies.' I have long hoped that some day I would see a Thespian Troupe in McClain High School. I am happy this ten-year desire is to be attained during my first year here. My vision is realized.

"And in Troupe 400, Thespians everywhere will find sixty of us who hope we may soon outgrow our 'baby troupe clothes' and put on the habiliments of the 'tried and true' and have our share of opportunities to be active in the Blue and Gold's realization of its vision: 'To create a spirit of active and intelligent interest in dramatics among boys and girls of our secondary schools.'"

To Mr. Fetherlin and his sixty charter students, to Mr. Duckworth, Mr. Booher and other school officials, to the members of the Board of Education, to Mrs. Edward Lee McClain, and to the many friends and patrons of the McClain High School, we send our sincere wishes for a successful ceremony on February 5, and we join wholeheartedly with them in the observance of National Drama Week.

that looks like a happy married life. But I'll tell you what it is at supper. (*Moves to ballroom.*)

Lord Windermere: Margaret, I MUST speak to you.

Lady Windermere: Will you hold my fan for me, Lord Darlington? Thanks. (*Crosses to him.*)

Lord Windermere (*crossing to her*): Margaret, what you said before dinner was, of course, impossible?

Lady Windermere: That woman is not coming here tonight!

Lord Windermere (*R. C.*): Mrs. Erlynne is coming here, and if you in any way annoy or wound her, you will bring shame and sorrow on us both. Remember that! Ah, Margaret, only trust me! A wife should trust her husband!

Lady Windermere: London is full of women who trust their husbands. One can always recognize them. They look so thoroughly unhappy. I am not going to be one of them. (*Moves up.*) Lord Darlington, will you give me back my fan please? Thanks—a useful thing, a fan, isn't it?... I want a friend tonight, Lord Darlington. I didn't know I would want one so soon.

Lord Darlington: Lady Windermere! I knew the time would come some day; but why tonight?

Lord Windermere: I will tell her. I must. It would be terrible if there were any scene. Margaret...

Parker: Mrs. Erlynne. (*LORD WINDERMERE starts. MRS. ERLYNNE enters, very beautifully dressed and very dignified. LADY WINDERMERE clutches at her fan, then lets it drop on the floor. She bows coldly to MRS. ERLYNNE, who bows to her sweetly in turn, and sails into the room.*)

Lord Darlington: You have dropped your fan, Lady Windermere. (*He picks it up and hands it to her.*)

Mrs. Erlynne: How do you do, again, Lord Windermere? How charming your sweet wife looks! Quite a picture!

Lord Windermere (*in a low voice*): It was terribly rash of you to come!

Mrs. Erlynne (*smiling*): The wisest thing I ever did in my life. And, by the way, you must pay me a good deal of attention this evening. I am afraid of the women. You must introduce me to some of them. The men I can always manage. How do you do, Lord Augustus? You have quite neglected me lately. I have not seen you since yesterday. I am afraid you're faithless. Every one told me so.

Choosing the Festival Play*

by ERNEST BAVELY

Editor, *The High School Thespian*, Cincinnati, Ohio

THE choice of a suitable contest or festival play requires earnest and thoughtful attention. It is often a task of great responsibility for those to whom the choice is entrusted. It calls for a complete understanding of present-day standards employed for selecting plays at the high school and college levels, and a knowledge of the abilities of those students from whom the players will be chosen. Consideration must also be given to the question of royalties, size of cast, distribution of major roles, time required for the performance of the play, problems which will arise in connection with the stage settings and stage facilities offered by the school or college where the tournament will be held. A careful study should also be made of the play requirements and restrictions outlined in the contest or festival rules. The teacher who has the responsibility of directing the tournament play must give some thought to her own qualifications as a director and to her preferences as to the type of play which she is temperamentally and artistically best fitted to produce. It is with these important factors that we shall be concerned in this discussion.

Those to whom the choice of the tournament play is entrusted may well begin their search with a study of those standards employed for selecting all plays for student groups, particularly those at the high school level. The standards given below (in boldface) were prepared by the writer in 1938 and unanimously endorsed by the Committee on the Teaching of the Drama in the Secondary Schools of The American Educational Theatre Association, and are presented here with the belief that they form a reliable yardstick for determining the suitability of the tournament play.

1. The play should have a worth while theme, be sincere and true in its interpretation of life, and accurate in its reflection of customs and manners. Like all other school plays, the tournament play should be fundamentally sound in its basic idea. That idea must be presented in a manner that is true to the life we know. It must present a wholesome outlook on life. This, of course, does not mean that we are to choose plays of the "goody-goody" or "namby-pamby" variety. Nor does it mean that we are to choose plays in which the protagonist always emerges as the winner, or in which there is always a moral at the end, like AEsop's fables. The tournament play must be genuine and worth while in its subject,

and it makes little difference whether that subject is presented as a tragedy, a comedy, a fantasy, or a farce. Some examples of well-known contest and festival plays which meet this requirement are: *The Valiant*, *The Beau of Bath*, *The First Dress Suit*, *Where the Cross is Made*, *The Boor*, and *A Marriage Proposal*.

2. The play should have literary value. Most teachers place much emphasis upon this requirement, and rightly so, for we are after all deeply concerned with a matter that does affect the language development of our students. By this requirement is meant that a play should be written in language that is true to the characters and situations found in the play, and that the play itself be written in accordance with accepted standards of playwriting. This does not mean that we must always choose plays written in the language of Shakespeare, Browning, Tennyson, or any of the other great literary figures. Most of the plays we know do not come any way near meeting such high standards. The tournament play should, as a piece of dramatic writing, be emotionally and intellectually stimulating to the actors and to the audience. The following are examples of plays which possess literary value: *Man in the Bowler Hat*, *Ile*, *Beauty and the Jacobin*, *Six Who Pass While the Lentils Boil*, *Land of Heart's Desire*, *Enter the Hero*, *Pink and Patches*, and *The Maker of Dreams*.

3. The play should be within the capacities of students to understand, interpret, and appreciate. The tournament play should be chosen with consideration for the mental and emotional growth of those who are to appear in it. Consideration must also be given to the part vicarious experience and natural interests play in the make-up of the student. Obviously, a play that is not understood by students, cannot be interpreted or appreciated by them. The play that is chosen should have a theme and situations that students can understand. Characters should be true and real to the imagination of students. It is also very important that a play be chosen that the teacher-director understands. Not infrequently have plays given at festivals and contests shown that those who had directed them had not grasped the real significance of the plays nor the manner or mood in which they should have been interpreted. Examples of tournament plays which are within the capacities of students are: *I Am a Jew*, *The Neighbors*, *The Pot Boiler*, *Highness*, *Dust of the Road*, *Fixin's*, and *The Wonder Hat*.

4. The play should challenge the highest creative and artistic abilities of

all who are associated with its production, thereby affording rich opportunities for study, analysis, and experimentation. Critic judges have repeatedly pointed out that it is far better to choose a play that has "meat," so to speak, even if students do not do it so well, than it is to choose a play with little substance to it but which students can do well. A check of the plays which have taken honors in recent tournaments show that most of them are plays of merit which offer opportunities for good characterizations and which have lines that are worth memorizing. Plays should be chosen that present a challenge to the imagination, that tax—without over-taxing—the abilities of the cast, the stage crew, and all others who are associated with their production. A few examples of tournament plays which meet this requirement are: *Back of the Yards*, *The Last of the Lowries*, *Spreading the News*, *The Terrible Meek*, *Our Dearest Possession*, *Ile*, and *Riders to the Sea*.

5. The play should be good theatre, affording opportunities for sincere acting and satisfying as entertainment. Regardless of how well a play may be written, or how well it may meet the mental and emotional development of those who will act in it, or how elevating its theme or philosophy, it is a failure if it does not possess those qualities which are expressed by the term "good theatre." It is not necessary that a play make the audience laugh, but it must entertain and interest the audience in some way or another. It must continue to hold the interest of the audience as a story that is being acted on the stage. *The Valiant* has many qualities about it that make it an ideal contest or festival play, but its outstanding quality is the fact that it is, first of all, "good theatre." Other examples of tournament plays which meet this requirement are: *Grandma Pulls the String*, *The Lost Silk Hat*, *The Game of Chess*, *A Marriage Proposal*, and *The Giant's Stair*.

6. The play should be free of highly sophisticated or advanced roles, profanity, objectionable subject matter, and sordid and unwholesome presentations of characters or scenes. The majority of teachers will insist that all school plays be *clean plays*. With so many good plays available, there is no reason why the festival or contest play should be one in which the characters use profane language, get drunk, or are shown in sordid situations. There is a place for realism on the high school or college stage, but naturalism, particularly of that brand we have seen during the past twenty years, has its limitations as far as the educational theatre is concerned. We all know that every city has its garbage dump. That is no reason, however, why we should stand on the dump and shout, "This is life!" There are hundreds of plays which present the better side of life to which the choice of the tournament play should be confined.

There are many plays which, with a few

(Continued on page 13)

* Reprinted by permission from the author's *Yearbook of Drama Festivals and Contests*, The Educational Theatre Press, Box 833, Cincinnati, Ohio (1939).

Robert Emmet Sherwood

by JOSEPH MERSAND

Department of English, Boys High School, Brooklyn, N. Y.

"NO other native dramatist has so successfully combined sane thinking with exciting writing, and no one has put honest melodrama to such good use as he." Thus does Burns Mantle characterize Robert Emmet Sherwood, twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize for drama and one of the directors of the Playwrights' Company.* Considering that Sherwood's career as a playwright began in 1927 and that it includes only ten plays, the record is remarkable. Sherwood has shown uncanny adeptness in so many different styles of dramatic writing that the keenest playgoer cannot predict the next direction his brilliant talents will take. Lacking the emotional profundity of Eugene O'Neill, the heaven-sent gift of poetic diction of Maxwell Anderson, the bitter incisiveness and clear vision of Sidney Howard, Sherwood has managed to master the dramatic form in the short space of a dozen years, and ranks today among the first ten American dramatists.

If one word were needed to characterize his dramatic gifts "versatility" might best describe them. Consider his amazing shifts in literary styles since his first play, *The Road to Rome* (1927). It came at a time when history was being debunked, when such books as John Erskine's *Helen of Troy*, *Galahad*, and *Penelope's Man* were best sellers. Great historical personages were treated by novelists, biographers, and historians as human beings, subject to the same weaknesses and foibles that most people are heir to.

In *The Road to Rome* Sherwood explains Hannibal's failure to sack Rome as a personal favor to Amytes, lovely wife of the weak-willed Fabian, who has been immortalized because of his delaying tactics, in the term "Fabianism." Graced by two superb performers, Jane Cowl as Amytis and Richard Merivale as Hannibal, the play introduced a brilliant new writing personality to Broadway.

Prior to his debut as a dramatist, Sherwood had been known in certain limited circles as the motion picture critic of *Vanity Fair* at the time when Frank Crowninshield was its editor, and Dorothy Parker and Robert Benchley were writing dramatic criticism. Resigning out of sympathy with

Dorothy Parker, who refused to retract a caustic criticism and was fired, Sherwood became motion picture critic of *Life* (then a humor magazine), later associate editor, and finally editor-in-chief. Those who would search for more revealing experiences of the dramatist that would explain his amazing knowledge of dramatic technique, will find little information. His career in Harvard as an editor of the *Lampoon*, the humorous magazine, his disillusioning experiences in the First World War, his close association with that brilliant Broadway set of writers who have all become almost household words—Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, Alexander Woollcott, Heywood Brown, Lucius Beebe—these may cast some light on his comic preferences, his glittering diction, and his hatred of war and the degenerating civilization which causes it.

Not all of Sherwood's plays have been unqualified successes. *The Love Nest* (1927) was a dramatization of a Ring Lardner story about a movie director's wife who, under the influence of liquor, told the world all that should not have been told of her husband. It failed. *The Queen's Husband* (1928) was suggested

by the American tour of Queen Marie of Rumania. The husband, played by Roland Young, took advantage of his spouse's absence to assert himself in a manner to make the play more entertaining than *The Love Nest* but inferior to *The Road to Rome*.

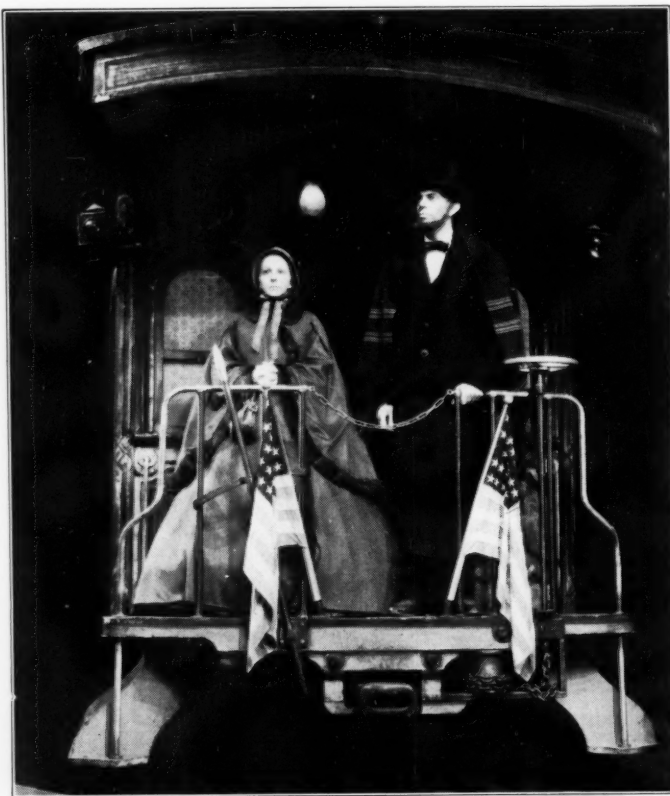
Sherwood lived in England for a few years. *Waterloo Bridge* (1930) takes place in London. It was a melodramatic little study of an American chorus girl who was stranded in London, but who managed to retain enough goodness to impress an idealistic young American doughboy. Sherwood was obviously using his knowledge of war-time characters and experiences, but he did not make a truly significant contribution to the theme of War until he wrote *Idiot's Delight* (1936).

This Is New York (1930) was one of the melodramatic frothy bits which folded its tents almost as soon as it came to rest. This ended the "groping" period in Sherwood's career. The next five plays were all hits and two of them carried off the highest honors of the year. When *Reunion in Vienna* was produced with almost fabulous success in 1931, Sherwood was called the American Molnar, so expertly had he captured the form and the spirit of the Hungarian master's light comedies.

Thanks to the delightful performances of the Lunts, *Reunion in Vienna* was heralded as one of the gayest comedies in years. The reunion takes place between Prince Rudolph Maximilian, who since the Peace has been driving a taxi in Nice, and Elena, who was once his favorite mistress. Although she is happily married to a famous psychoanalyst, she cannot resist the impulsive and emotional royal lover and they have one more tryst. Sherwood revealed in this play that he had recaptured his comic gifts so startlingly revealed in *The Road to Rome*.

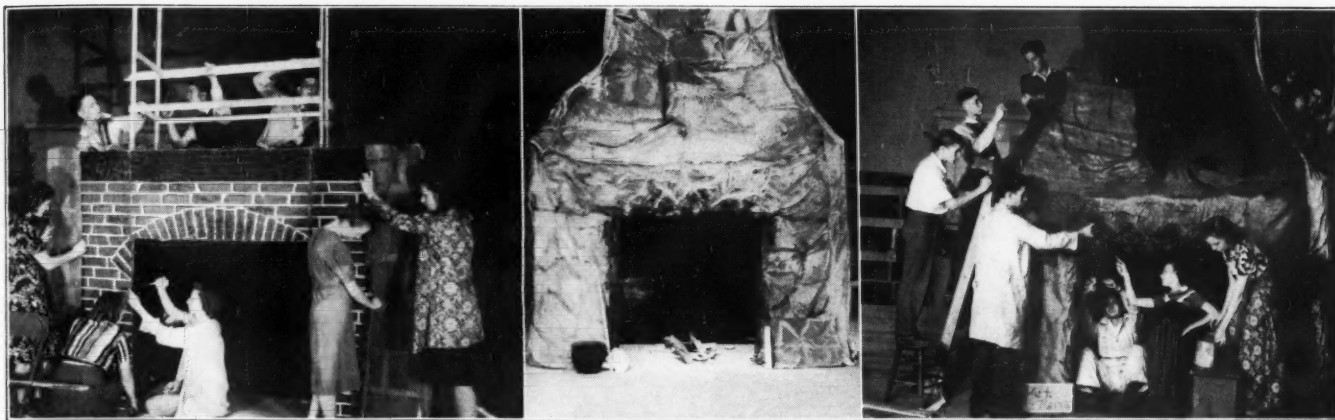
For a period of four years he devoted his talents to writing for the screen and then the yearning for the living stage was too strong. In 1935 *The Petrified Forest* revealed an entirely new Sherwood, one no longer gay and flippant, but one deeply concerned with the gradual decay of the civilization around him. Since this was subsequently made into a moving picture, it was the first of his works to make Sherwood familiar to the great mass of American drama-lovers who do not live in New York.

Sherwood collected in his play various representatives of our civilization, including a gangster and his mob, a sensitive artist who cannot endure the raw civilization represented by the gangster and a talented young daughter of the



Raymond Massey as Abe Lincoln and Muriel Kirkland as Mary Todd in a scene from Robert E. Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize play, *ABE LINCOLN IN ILLINOIS*, now on tour among principal cities in the United States.

* *Contemporary American Playwrights*, New York. Dodd, Mead. 1938. P. 23.



Thespians Building a Fireplace at Abilene, Texas, High School. Directed by Mr. C. B. Ford.

Left: The stage crew starts work on a new fireplace, putting frame-work and chicken wire on old brick fireplace. Right: The frame has been covered with odd pieces of cloth which have been dipped in a weak solution of glue. Center: The cloth is allowed to dry and is then painted with dry-powder paint.

gas-station owner who is spiritually dying on the desert. The hero signs over his life-insurance policy to the gifted girl and begs the escaping bandit to "rub him out." Sherwood achieved new heights of dramatic dialogue, emotional richness, and living characterization. Professor Allardyce Nichol, of the Yale School of Drama, commented upon the similarity in motif between *The Petrified Forest* and other great English plays based on sacrifices of the principal characters. Though Professor Nichol may have indirectly deprecated Sherwood's lack of originality, he at the same time indicated that the contemporary playwright was writing in a great and permanent tradition and not as heretofore, in the momentarily clever manner of a commentator in a humorous magazine.

His next play, *Idiot's Delight* (1936), won the Pulitzer Prize for that year and is one of the most effective anti-war messages in dramatic form. Of one thing we may be certain when we pick up a printed play of Sherwood. The preface will be truly illuminating and will often explain the genesis, motives, and methods of composition. For the young student of dramatic literature such prefaces are of incalculable value in forming standards of judgment, in developing insight into the mystery of a play's origin and development, and in appreciating the realization of the author's intentions.

In the postscript to the printed edition of *Idiot's Delight*, the author expresses these marvellously appropriate sentiments:

"If decent people will continue to be intoxicated by the synthetic spirit of patriotism, pumped into them by megalomaniac leaders, and will continue to have faith in the 'security' provided by those lethal weapons sold to them by the armaments industry, then war is inevitable; and the world will soon resolve itself into the semblance of an anthill, governed by commissars who owe their power to the profundity of their contempt for the individual members of their species."

This play was also made into a successful motion-picture and the plot need not

be recounted. It revealed not only the Sherwood of brilliant dialogue, gay situations tinged slightly by the intimacies of the *liason*, but also the Sherwood who was troubled by the march of brute force and the inevitable collapse of civilization unless it be stopped. There have been many anti-war plays in the last decade of American drama, like *Peace on Earth*, *Ten Million Ghosts*, *For Services Rendered*, *The Drums Begin*, but most theater-goers will hardly recognize these titles. *Idiot's Delight* not only stated an important message, perhaps the most important that any artist can state today, but it was at the same time a compelling drama. Many varied personalities were accurately delineated, the story unfolded itself with unerring deftness, and the climax, punctured by the explosion of bombs bursting, was unforgettable.

Tovarich (1936) was adapted from the French comedy of Jacques Deval and is hardly an important contribution from Sherwood. *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1938) is his most important play to date and was awarded the Pulitzer Prize. It is now being translated into a moving picture, and is still running on Broadway after more than a year. Sherwood's task in this biographical drama is a more exhausting one than that of Drinkwater's *Lincoln* or E. P. Conkle's *Prologue to Glory*, to mention but two recent Lincoln dramas. He covers a period of thirty years of remarkable growth from the awkward young man of twenty-odd years to the successful President-elect about to take the train to Washington.

Few plays about American heroic figures have been successful. Even Maxwell Anderson could do little with the character of Washington in his *Valley Forge*, which must be considered one of his lesser pieces. Plays about Nathan Hale, Benedict Arnold, Aaron Burr, John Brown, and Peter Stuyvesant have been unsuccessful in holding audiences. Sherwood's *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* will probably establish a record run for plays of that type. Mod-

estly refusing too much credit for fashioning one of the most stirring biographical dramas of modern times, Sherwood declared in a newspaper interview that Carl Sandburg's *The Prairie Years* awakened his interest in the strange emotionalism of Lincoln as a young man.

"Up to then," he said, "I'd thought that he was a statue, even while he was living. I thought he certainly was the embodiment of all that was noble and courageous and heroic."

After reading considerable material on Lincoln's life—speeches, letters, and memoirs of contemporaries, Sherwood found that "this wasn't a job of playwriting. It was a job of editing. After I got my material together it was just a job of carpentering." It may have been only a job of carpentering for Sherwood but many a dramatist has banged his fingers trying to do the same job. Enough articles have been written on *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* to make a good sized volume. In final summation, it is fairly safe to say that is the most human and believable portrait of The Great Emancipator in American drama.

Sherwood is one of the dramatists who formed the Playwrights' Company, an organization devoted to the artistic production of the plays of its members. To date, his is the most successful play produced by the organization, Maxwell Anderson's *Knickerbocker Holiday* and *Key Largo*, S. N. Behrman's *No Time For Comedy*, and Elmer Rice's *American Landscape* being the other plays.

Robert Sherwood is only forty-two and seems to be increasing in artistic stature with each effort. To date he has demonstrated a gift for brilliant comic dialogue, a sure grasp of dramatic technique, an ability to write plays with social and ethical overtones which do not destroy the work of art, a mastery of the biography in dramatic form, and an open-mindedness which permits him to use varied subjects and styles of writing. He is still, after winning the Pulitzer Prize twice, a dramatist with an unpredictable future.

The Directors' Round Table

PUBLICITY STUNT

by LOLO F. EDDY

Township High School, Harrisburg, Ill.

TO advertise a play before the student body of 1,200, we have two assemblies the week of the play, which is usually presented on Friday night. The first meeting is held on Monday morning for the purpose of introducing the members of the cast and announcing the plan of ticket sale. At a second assembly on Thursday of the same week, interesting bits from the play with popular appeal are given—in an original way, if we can think of a good one. Year before last we capitalized the timely sitdown strike and Supreme Court issues. Last year our stunt went over even better, and we pass it along, because other directors may be on the lookout for some idea not yet used.

It was announced in the study halls that a talent scout from Hollywood in search of new faces would look the student body over and discuss a plan for the acting of the most talented. When the students had assembled, out from backstage strode an eccentrically dressed junior, who addressed them somewhat in this fashion:

"I have been informed that there is amazing talent among the students of the Harrisburg Township High School. Will those of you who have had experience please come down to the stage for a try-out?"

At this signal the junior play cast as planned rushed forward from their places in the audience and the following dialogue ensued.

Talent Scout: Are you all high school students?

Cast: Yes, certainly, of course (in chorus).

T. S.: To what class do you belong?

Cast (shouting): JUNIOR!

T. S.: All juniors? Well, well! The juniors seem to have a monopoly on dramatic talent around here! Now, what experience have you had? Have you staged *Romeo and Juliet*?

(The cast answers in the affirmative to this and to similar questions about several other well-known plays. Their repertoire is large, indeed.)

T. S.: Who directs you?

Voice from the audience: I do!

T. S.: Who are you?

Voice: Mildred Brantley. (It is the faculty director's student assistant in the play, as many in the audience know.)

T. S.: You direct this talented group alone?

Mildred: Well, Mrs. Eddy helps me a little bit. (The audience shouts its approval at this boasting by the student director.)

T. S.: Suppose you come to the stage? I should like your help. (To cast) Have you ever worked on *Daddy Long-Legs*? No? Well, I suppose you memorize readily. Um huh. Then take these scripts, memorize them, and present them for my approval.

(Some pages are passed to the cast, who glance at them and declare that they are ready. The talent scout, expresses surprise, but is equal to the situation.)

T. S.: Take your places for Scene One! Ready? Lights! Action!

(Between each scene it was necessary

We propose to publish occasionally a department devoted to ideas, opinions, suggestions, comments, and professional secrets contributed by teachers and directors of dramatics. We want this department to be just what the title says it is—a round table for directors. We invite you, therefore, to become a contributor to this department at once. You probably have an idea or suggestion that will prove most helpful to some other director, or perhaps you have a question that you want to ask. Especially welcomed will be your articles on "how you did it." All we ask is that you be brief and to the point. Limit your articles to 400 words or less.

And once in a while, we want to make this a Students' Round Table. We invite all our student readers to send us their ideas, suggestions, and comments. As soon as we have enough materials on hand, we will devote an issue to our students' opinions.—Editor.

to shift some of the chairs which served as such and a davenport. This was done by the student director and the players while the audience watched with interest. Then the talent scout, seated now in the front row, would again call out: "Ready?", at which the players would freeze in proper position ready to begin at the signal of "Action!" At the end of each scene the word "Cut" was shouted. After some five interesting parts of the play were thus presented, the talent scout, deeply impressed at the talent demonstrated, asked the students to memorize the entire play and present it on the following night for the approval of the public. In his opinion they all had the making of stars, he stated, but since the public was the determining factor in the last analysis, he would leave it to the audience on the morrow night to decide the fate of the talented young people who had just performed.

Our stunt was finished. The students did turn out the next night to see the play.

LARGE CAST ON A SMALL STAGE

by ELMER S. CROWLEY

Madison High School, Rexburg, Idaho

WHEN one finds a play involving the audience, a large cast, and staging problems aplenty, things begin happening. We have a small stage at Madison High School, one hemmed in with supporting walls, making it impossible to enlarge our acting area. Yet that spark of wanting to do something different and larger still flows in the life blood of this small school in southeastern Idaho.

With this in mind, Broadway's success, *Night of January 16th*, was chosen as the all-school play and rehearsals began. At first the attempts were somewhat disheartening. A large cast was involved,

(a large cast for a small stage) twenty-two individuals with few parts that could really be considered minor in the shaping of the evidence and the plot. Yet an important group of players were absent on rehearsal nights. This group consisted of twelve men and women who were to serve on the Jury and who were to receive for their services a refund equal to the price of admission. They were chosen by lot after leaving their names at the door the evening of the play. Because they take their places on the stage after being called by the Clerk of the Court before the auditorium lights are dimmed, and because they play such an important role in building up the spirit of the players (not to mention the rendering of the verdict on which the play hinges) the cast found it rather difficult to "stay in the picture" before the night of the play. This was more than paid for, however, by the effect of the audience on the cast in final production.

The witnesses had definite seats reserved at strategic points in the audience and came forward to testify on the witness stand when called by the Court Clerk. This gave the feeling to the audience that they were an integral part of the play; it also provided suspense as no one knew what would happen next.

Interesting problems in make-up presented themselves, as the make-up had to be sufficiently convincing to meet the glare of the bright lights and at the same time not to attract undue attention from the audience. We had the negress made up with No. 11 Mulatto grease paint and as she sat among the onlookers one good woman became much concerned over the fact that her little nephew was sitting next to a colored woman. She seriously considered going over and moving him. She was called to serve on the jury, however, and soon found that this black creation was merely a witness.

For the Judge's stand we enlarged an old fireplace and covered it with canvas. (Factory would suffice). Building paper proved unsatisfactory as it failed to give a finished appearance. The stand was sized and then finishing touches were added with brown poster paint.

Our biggest problem, however, was that of overcoming the limitations of our stage. The plan was made for a stage 32 feet wide and 15 feet deep. Our boards measured deep enough but lacked about ten feet in width. We found it totally impossible to include on a well balanced stage all the equipment essential to the play. After studying the possibilities more carefully, we changed the Judge's stand from its central position to stage R. and placed the witness stand in the prominent position almost Center back. The Jury box consisted of two long benches borrowed from a neighboring church and these were placed in full view of the audience stage L.

Now as to the location of the lawyers' tables. We took a flight into the realm of "experimental" theatre and decided to

go beyond the confines of the proscenium and its traditional boundary. Accordingly we had the shop build seven short saw horses about a foot high and nine feet long. These were spaced equally distant from points directly in front of the stage. On these were placed four platforms made of planks 1"x12"x1" and lashed together at each end. (These can be borrowed from the lumber company and returned). When the platforms were all secured a ground cloth was placed over the major portion of the entire platform. A railing was made to surround this new addition to the stage and was right up against the stage proper. Stairs as shown in the picture led up to the main playing level. The lower portion of the platform was masked off and as a final touch no patrons were allowed to sit on the first row of the center section. This was reserved for those members of the cast who would be on the "platform" when the curtain was drawn at the close of the first act.

Spotlights were adjusted on the ventilators in the auditorium ceiling and focused properly to light each of the two lawyer's tables. The light diffused sufficiently to light the entire area. These lights remained on at the close of each act and tended to keep attention in an otherwise darkened auditorium. No orchestra was used because of the very nature of the play.

At the close of the first Act those players who were on the platform when the curtain was drawn took places on the first row as Court was adjourned. At the close of the second Act the lawyers and secretaries remained on the platforms to work over "business" for the last act.

The play's ending comes as a surprise and the curtain remains open while the Judge gives his decision and dismisses the jurymen from service. The audience leaves feeling it has witnessed a real and exciting trial and believe you me there are still arguments going on as to whether the defendant was guilty.

I hope this slight immersion into what I please to call "experimental" theatre will give a possible way of overcoming staging difficulties to other directors working on small stages. It is an interesting and different way out of an otherwise impossible situation—bringing a "sophisticated" Broadway play to a small stage.

DEVELOPING STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

by MILDRED I. BROWN

Quarryville High School, Quarryville, Penna.

YOU mean to tell me that you sat in the audience during the entire performance? Wasn't there any faculty member backstage? Who saw that Sue was ready for her cues? How did you ever have nerve enough to let Bill and that gang alone backstage?

Yes, it was an innovation to have the director of the high school play sit in



Scene from *NIGHT OF JANUARY 16TH* as produced by Mr. Elmer S. Crowley at Madison, Idaho, High School. (See article on opposite page.)

the audience the night the play was presented. I answered these many queries very frankly and explained my reasons. I feel that the only way to check up and improve my directing is to see the final performance with the audience. Therefore from the very day of casting until the dress rehearsal I stress student responsibility. If this attitude is carefully developed in all the students connected with the play, the director may feel absolutely free to let the students carry on alone.

The secret of this system is to have the students assume complete responsibility through the entire period of rehearsing. (We rehearse four weeks for a three-act play.) First of all procrastination has no place in this motivating scheme. At the initial meeting of the cast, everyone is made to realize that acting begins only when no scripts are in sight. It is understood that no scripts are in hand during the last two weeks of rehearsing. This takes care of lines, gives the cast confidence, and is the best cure for stage fright.

The crew also learns its duties immediately, and each member has his own written list of his responsibilities. We do rent our sets; so our two biggest problems are stage effects and properties. An early dead-line is set for the completion of both, and props are on hand in the closet nearest the stage where they are available for rehearsals. This takes care of the too-frequent last-minute rushes for necessary stage effects and properties.

The most dependable and willing student is selected as stage manager. This person attends every rehearsal, holds the prompt book from the very beginning, and knows the play as well as any member of the cast.

Both cast and stage crew rehearse together *before* the night of dress rehearsal. Every one is on his toes. Any serious errors are corrected immediately. Late stage effects or entrance require instant

repetition of the last few lines. The students themselves realize that to keep the audience interested, perfect timing and prompt responses to cues must replace lagging and those dreadful pauses between speeches.

The director's responsibility of bringing out the best ability of the actors accomplished largely through individual conferences and group conferences after a certain unit or act during rehearsals. This helps the student to rely more upon himself than upon the director. If by these methods the pupils are made to realize their own responsibilities in helping to make the complete production a success, the director is merely "in the way" backstage.

Choosing the Festival Play

(Continued from page 9)

minor changes made here and there in the lines, are excellent tournament material. The need for clean plays does not mean that we are to have plays with all the life wrung out of them. The trouble with so many teachers who become too anxious to choose a play that is clean and morally acceptable is that they end up with some "namby-pamby" play that violates most of the standards discussed above and which fails miserably as drama. It is not necessary to give examples of the many tournament plays now published which are clean and which have life.

If a royalty play is chosen, the royalty fee should be taken care of at once. All tournaments known to the writer require each participating school to pay its own royalty fees. Some sponsoring organizations require a signed statement from each school showing that the royalty fee has been paid. Arrangements with the publishers should cover repeat performances of the play in the event that it is a winner in the local festival or contest and is chosen to go to the regional or state tournament.

(Continued on page 17)

Educational Theatre Convention Has Well-Planned Program

AN interesting, timely, and well-planned program consisting principally of panel discussions and committee reports distinguished this year's convention of The American Educational Theatre Association held in Chicago on December 27, 28, 29. The absence of long papers typical of previous convention, the care with which meetings were scheduled so as to avoid conflicts, and the fact that the discussion leaders for each meeting were held down to a few, thereby permitting greater audience participation, resulted in a well-rounded program that benefited all who were privileged to attend. A summary of some of the most important meetings is given below:

President's Address

"THE Theatre and Social Change" was the subject of Dr. Lee Norvelle's address at the opening session held in conjunction with that of The National Association of Teachers of Speech on Wednesday morning, December 27. Dr. Norvelle devoted the greater part of his address to a discussion of the effect of the educational and commercial theatre upon the social changes of the past two decades, pointing out that, beginning with Eugene O'Neill, most of our important playwrights have given us plays that deal with social and political problems. Among the plays which deal with these problems he included *Beyond the Horizon*, *Nice People*, *The Adding Machine*, *What Price Glory*, *They Knew What They Wanted*, *Silver Cord*, and *In Abraham Bosom*. Dr. Norvelle closed his address with the statement that, while our playwrights of the past twenty years have given us no solution to our social problems, they have done much good by way of presenting these problems to our theatre audiences. —Ernest Bavely, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Committee on Teaching of Dramatics on the Secondary School Level

MAJOR Charles C. Mather of Culver Military Academy calmly informed his audience that half the world was "nuts" but that dramatics teachers were not in that category because they are teaching their pupils to live in this half-mad world by showing them how to adapt themselves to any given situation through cooperative effort, by becoming a social unit, and by becoming a self-supporting unit. He insisted that plays be chosen by the group that will produce them, with the choice being wisely managed by the director. Lack of punctuality and lateness in learning lines should be disproved by the rest of the cast.

Miss Ruth Kentzler of Central High School, Madison, Wisconsin, spoke on the importance of the dramatics teacher in the secondary school field. The teacher has a

Dr. Evans New President

Dr. Dina Rees Evans of Heights High School, Cleveland, Ohio, was elected President of The American Educational Theatre Association for 1940. Mrs. Marian Stebbins of Mills College, California, was elected Vice-President.

three-fold duty to perform: service to the individual pupil, service to the school, and service to the community. Dr. Donald Winbigger of the University of Iowa High School discussed four types of dramatic activity in our schools: 1. Dramatics is used as a device to teach something else. 2. Dramatics is used purely as an activity—a chance to do something, no matter what. 3. Dramatics is used as an art program which implies the use of attitudes and skills. 4. Dramatics is used as a unit in speech training—a form of interpretative speech. He said all these programs are good but that not more than one should be stressed in any one production.

Miss Nellie McCaslin of Tudor Hall, Indianapolis, Indiana, spoke on the problems that confront the dramatics teacher in the small school. The panel discussion, which was lead by Paul Marks of Lorain, Ohio, closed with a practical demonstration—production of the play, *Gamma Gorton's Needle*, directed by Dorothy Flanders and Mary Gorrell of the Gary, Indiana, Public Schools.—Cyril F. Leiter, Fostoria, Ohio, High School.

Alice Gerstenberg Speaks at Thespian Luncheon

Alice Gerstenberg, nationally known leader in amateur theatricals and author of such popular plays as *The Pot Boiler*, *The Unseen*, *Overtones*, *The Queen's Christmas*, and *Upstage*, was the guest speaker at the joint luncheon of Alpha Psi Omega, Delta Psi Omega, and The National Thespian Society held at the Y. M. C. A. Hotel in Chicago, on Friday, December 29. Miss Gerstenberg spoke to a very interested audience on how some of her better known plays came to be written. Other special guests at the luncheon included Mr. Garrett Leverton of Samuel French, Mr. R. L. Sergel of The Dramatic Publishing Company, Mr. Lee Owen Snook of Row, Peterson & Co., and Miss Sarah Spencer of The Children's Theatre Press.

Among Thespians in attendance at the convention were Ernest Bavely, Cincinnati, Ohio; Maurine Morgan, Eveleth, Minn.; Barbara Wellington, Fall River, Mass.; Mrs. Clem Krider, Paris, Tenn.; Marion Stuart, Champaign, Ill.; Ethel Hamilton, Urbana, Ill.; Prof. and Mrs. Robert W. Masters, Terre Haute, Ind.; Margaret Meyn, Wyoming, Ill.; Myrna M. Jones, Omaha, Nebr.; Iva G. Brashear, Wellsburg, W. Va.; Hazel Shamleffer, Wichita, Kansas; Wylie Fetherlin, Greenfield, Ohio; Lillie Mae Bauer, Clarksburg, W. Va.; Mary Temple, Onarga, Ill.; W. N. Viola, Pontiac, Mich.; Agner Solusberg, Sault Ste. Marie, Mich.; O. E. Sams, Knoxville, Tenn.; Helen Dunham, Stambaugh, Mich.; Frances Young, River Forest, Ill.; Josephine Wible, Dover, Ohio; Mrs. Elsie Ball, Indianapolis, Ind.; and Marion Cass, Glen Cove, N. Y.

Demonstrations of Directing and Acting

"I AM interested in the theatre only from the viewpoint of the actor. Take away the actor and you have nothing left. He, not the director, makes the theater. However, there should be no separation between the director and the actor, for how can a director direct unless he can act? No director has the right to impose himself on the actor, and tell him how to interpret the part. He can and should aid in developing the actor's imagination by creating psychological situations. Then as the imagination develops, as the character is being created, there comes within the actor a feeling which results in intelligent interpretation". With these opening comments, David B. Itkin, formerly of the Moscow Art Theatre and now director of drama at De Paul University, presented some of his night class students at the Goodman Art Theater in the first act of *George and Margaret*. This meeting, of which Valentine B. Windt of the University of Michigan was chairman, was one of the most delightful and interesting of the convention program.

Mr. Itkin made this interesting point relative to relaxation during rehearsals: "Relax, play with the actors, and you will get results. They feel important. They are doing creative work. The theater is life. Voice, diction, gestures have nothing to do with the creative power of the actor. These will come as a part of the interpretation."—Hazel Shamleffer, Wichita High School East.

Lighting Demonstrations

AT this meeting Theodore Fuchs of Northwestern University demonstrated a dimmerette for use on a small stage. The dimmerette may be purchased from the Ward Metal Electric Co., Mt. Vernon, N. Y. Buyers should insist on a Hart slow-brake switch instead of the one attached. Mr. Fuchs also demonstrated a new transformer-type dimmer manufactured by the General Radio Co. Leaflets describing these dimmers may be obtained from the manufacturers. Buyers are urged to insist on 15 ampere power receptacles which are necessary. McDonald Held of Tarkio College demonstrated home-made borders, footlights, and spots, and emphasized the need for ventilation in building them. Full information on any of the equipment demonstrated may be had by writing to the Northwestern Theatre, Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill. —Lillie Mae Bauer, Washington Irving High School, Clarksburg, W. Va.

Playwriting and Experimental Productions

TWO definite goals were established during the discussion which followed the speakers at the meeting: 1. The group recognized the need for setting up playwriting courses wherever possible to encourage the young playwright. 2. To encourage the playwright of merit it is necessary to continue and enlarge the work being done by the Committee on Playwriting and Experimental Productions. During the past year, sixty college directors were found who are interested in doing experimental productions. Nine plays were called to the attention of the Committee. For this year, the Committee hopes to establish a National Bureau to assemble information on plays available for manuscript productions. Speakers included E. P. Conkle, Hubert Heffner, Foster Harmon, Sara Sherman Pryor, E. C. Mabie, and Russle



Cast and stage set for the production of *WELL MET BY MOONLIGHT*, at Laramie, Wyoming, High School.
Directed by Miss Velma Lindford. (Thespian Troupe No. 70.)

Lembke. Dr. George W. Savage was chairman. —*Mrs. George W. Savage, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash.*

Committee on Drama Festivals and Contests

THE committee on Drama Festivals and Contests, of which Ernest Bavelly was chairman, reached four conclusions with respect to problems associated with drama festivals and contests: 1. That the committee go on record as favoring the festival plan of sponsoring these events. 2. That the committee establish a set of uniform objectives. 3. That the committee prepare, from time to time, a list of plays recommended for use in our dramatic tournaments. 4. That the committee prepare a list of suggestions for the establishment, organization, and administration of drama festivals. —*Ernest Bavelly, Cincinnati, Ohio.*

Teaching of Dramatics on the Elementary School Level

THE meeting on teaching of dramatics on the elementary school level was arranged and conducted by Mildred Harter Wirt who brought children of all ages from the Garv Public Schools to give demonstrations. The demonstrations included dramatizations of folk and fairy tales; play scenes from best plays by junior high school pupils, and the presentation of a scene from *Master Pierre Patelin* by senior high school students. Preceding the demonstrations, Winifred Ward of Northwestern University, Carrie Rasmussen of the University of Wisconsin, Mrs. Lillian Masters of the Terre Haute Children's Theatre, and Alice Flickinger of the Shorewood Public Schools, participated in a panel discussion of problems concerning children play productions. —*Mrs. Lillian Masters, Terre Haute, Ind.*

Children's Theatre

THE meeting of the Children's Theatre group was held in the lounge of the Goodman Theatre, with Winifred Ward as the leader. Participants in the panel discussion included Charlotte Chorpennig of the Goodman Theatre, Winnie Mae Crawford of the Texas State College for Women, Denton, Texas, and Sara Spencer, editor of *The Children's Theatre Press*, Charleston, W. Va. Among the interesting points brought out during the discussion were: 1. The value for the players is in learning the technique that the theatre calls forth, but more than that, learning how to serve an art. The greatest lesson the theatre can teach is that a player's first obligation is to his audience. 2. Using the theatre as a device for personality development is all right, but it is not meant for an audience. It is like finger exercises and should be practised in the privacy of a studio. 3. The Children's Theatre movement suffers from a versatility of interests. Junior Leagues consider it as a welfare work. Educators regard it as an educational device. Parents sometimes

look at it as a nursery school. Actually it is none of these things. It is Theatre. And the only difference between it and the adult theatre is in the age of the audience. —*Sara Spencer, Charleston, W. Va.*

Theatre Designers and Technicians

ALTHOUGH the discussion tended to verge away from the topics listed on the program, the comments made proved both interesting and helpful. Theodore Fuchs of Northwestern University mentioned a "fixed-focus" lamp manufactured by General Electric which should be useful to directors and technicians in theatres where funds are limited. The question of what to do with \$144 available in a particular school was answered by suggesting the purchase of second-hand scenery. Mention was made, however, that second-hand lighting equipment was not satisfactory. Arnold Gillette of the University of Iowa mentioned the usefulness of draperies over frames and his system of cataloging flats. As each piece is built a card is added to the index listing the height, width and other information concerning the flat. Thus a complete record of such equipment is on hand. Changes are made on the card, if any subsequent changes in the piece are made.

The problem of inadequate storage space was discussed at some length, but few constructive comments were made. A school theatre director who mentioned having difficulty in securing the cooperation of the local architect designing the new auditorium was advised to tackle the school board rather than the architect. —*Maurine Morgan, Eveleth, Minn., Senior High School.*

Motion Picture Appreciation

ACCORDING to Mrs. Richard McClure, President of the Better Films Council of Chicago, no leisure-hour activity reflects the public taste or selectivity processes as does the attendance at the motion picture theatres. Today, it is hard to classify "taste" in movies. Formerly, it was children's this, and adults' that, but today it is difficult to find the dividing line. However, Hollywood has its eye on every known source that can give it reliable information so that the production plans will be in line with this changing taste. As teachers it becomes our responsibility and opportunity to develop the art of selection and to provide a new yard stick by which the oncoming audiences may more accurately judge those productions which are artistic and wholesome.

Progressing to "A Unit in Photoplay Appreciation," Minnie Sue Buckingham of Chicago Teachers' College presented some stimulating ideas for the appreciation of the Photoplay through the medium of the project method, and class discussions. A Mr. Lyde, teacher of English in Solomon High School in Chicago, pointed out that the Motion Picture is the most important medium of communication.

Since English deals with reading, writing and listening, Motion Picture Appreciation has a valuable place in the teaching of English. Mr. Lyde utilized a Scholastic Program in connection with class discussions of movies, using general and critical rating scales for evaluation of pictures. —*Margaret L. Meyn, Wyoming, Ill., Community High School.*

Radio Drama

ALTHOUGH the discussion went far beyond the topics listed on the program and although no conclusions were finally agreed upon, the following points of view were expressed: 1. Stage training is an excellent background for the radio actor. 2. A good actor on the stage is likely to be a good actor on the air and the technical differences between the stage and radio are easily mastered by the competent actor. 3. The university theatre is a good training ground for the student in radio acting. 4. Constant practice before the microphone with the use of written scripts and improvisation is the best training for the radio actor. 5. Some teachers reported success in teaching the writing of original scripts and suggested the use of adaptations as a beginning step in the teaching of creative writing. 6. It was found that many short stories and plays can be secured without cost for adaptation by the students upon application to the copyright owners. 7. The radio serial was discussed and the consensus was that the radio serial is not necessarily bad as a dramatic form but that there are too many of them on the air today and that many of them are cheap and over-sentimental. 8. The radio play may serve as a great democratic theatre by permitting listening and participation by thousands who formerly had no connection with the drama. 9. The use of radio, however, to propagandize for democracy was viewed with alarm as a device which might defeat its own purpose.

Following the panel the Columbia Broadcasting System gave a demonstration of the writing, casting, rehearsing, and producing of a radio program under the supervision of Lavinia Swartz. One of the "History in the Making" scripts was used and professional network actors, directors, writers, and sound men participated.

While the whole process was necessarily telescoped in order to get it into the time limit, it was one of the most interesting demonstrations of the entire convention, giving as it did a picture of the actual processes involved in bringing a program to our loud speakers. One of the most helpful aspects was the question and answer period following the demonstration in which the educators were told how one gets into radio work, what remuneration he may expect, and the relationship of organized labor through AFRA (American Federation of Radio Artist) to radio production.—*G. Harry Wright, Kent State University, Kent, O.*

Staging the High School Play

This department is designed to assist teachers in choosing, casting, and producing plays at the high school level. Suggestions as to plays which should be discussed next or how this department can be of greater assistance to teachers will be welcomed.

Edited by EARL W. BLANK

Thespian National Director and Director of Dramatics at Berea College, Berea, Ky.

ICEBOUND

For Your Mid-Winter Season

IN reviewing the last three issues of the THESPIAN, I have discovered that all of the past three play selections have been in lighter vein. Rather than delude the readers of this page into thinking that such diet was to be my express recommendation, I decided, with winter upon us, to choose a play of definitely serious texture.

Owen Davis' Pulitzer Prize, *Icebound*, appeals to me for this particular time of year. In the title alone lies much rich and valuable advertising aid. And this is a factor to be considered very seriously. Furthermore, I have pledged myself and the editor to select only plays I believe high school students can do successfully. At first reading the director or play-reading committee may think that I am wrong in making this particular recommendation to high school actors. I feel certain that this play is definitely within the high school scope and I am equally certain that it has had many successful high school productions. I should like to get some response from directors who have done this fine play and can help me vouch for my faith in it. Granting all this, I feel further that much of a play's success depends upon its seasonal value. *Icebound* is ideal for the winter months.

Icebound is published by Longmans, Green and Company, of 114 Fifth Avenue, New York. It is a \$25 royalty play; the scripts are 75c a book and a Director's Manuscript can be had which will prove of great value to a new director. I like the Longmans' actor's books. They are clearly typed or mimeographed and have a blank page opposite each printed page so that the actor can write in his direc-

tions opposite the line he is to say. These copies are free of excess authorship directions which a director is so often forced to change to meet his particular conditions. The author's stage directions are in full in the Director's Manuscript. These manuscripts are loaned.

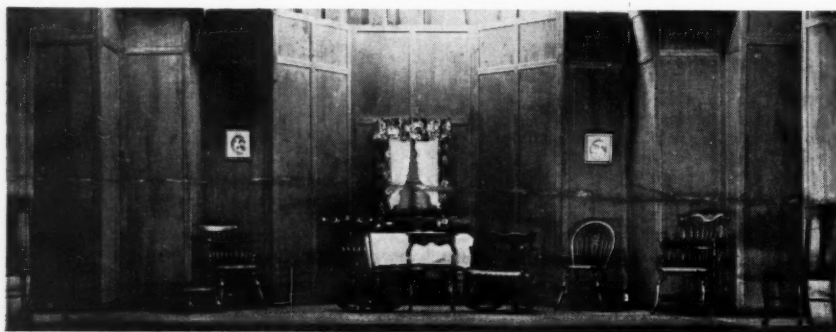
There are twelve characters equally divided between the sexes, unless the little boy is played by a girl. The inclusion of the child should not discourage a director or spoil the chances of deciding in favor of this play. There are always small boys or girls in any high school; if not, then go to a junior high or to the grades. The part is a good one and not taxing. In the production I refer to, we used a boy from a group other than the producing organization and we listed him as a guest actor. It proved excellent advertising and was very thrilling to the boy chosen; it did not give him a swelled head. The boy was a high school freshman.

The Longman's catalogue gives a very good outline of the play, so that I shall quote from it. "It is not the New England winter outside the windows of the Jordan parlor that is truly 'icebound,' but the personalities of the people in the play. The first act finds the members of the Jordan family waiting in the parlor while upstairs their mother is dying, and each of her selfish children is hoping for the major share of her money. When the will is read, it is Jane, a distant relative and almost a servant in the house, who is the beneficiary. The Jordans one and all are furious. But Jane considers that she holds the money in trust and the rest of the play tells how she shames the small-mindedness of the family and reforms Ben, the family's ne'er-do-well, by making him her servant until he has learned to think of someone other than himself."

From the above catalogue exposition one can readily understand that the play is unusual in its plot; it needs very good character acting, which too often our high schools dodge and do badly as a result. I believe high school actors should have chances at character acting. *I feel the attempt to write down to the high school level is flooding our high school stage with very poor plays.* May the high school stage be spared this calamity. This particular play is especially good for a solution to the above problem.

Icebound is clear in stating its locale—Maine. Like *Lavender and Old Lace*, it can have a simple New England setting. The costumes and period can be of similar character. However, do not forget that *Lavender and Old Lace* is warm and sentimental, homelike and summery; *Icebound* is the opposite in atmosphere. The setting should create an atmosphere of coldness, drabness and lack of comfort. The season is from November to March in the state of Maine.

Icebound has but one set so that the scenic artist can put forth all of his efforts in creating the effect of cheerlessness. The setting should seem stiff and straight-laced. I should say that an attempt at rigid simplicity would best suit the play. I submit a photograph of a simple way of staging this play. I submit it as much because it bears out an argument I support in favor of the use of simple screens or other simple methods in staging some plays. I have had quite some experience with screens and find them an admirable asset. I should like to point out that Professor Robert Masters in his book, *The Curtain Rises* (D. C. Heath & Co., Chicago), mentions the use of cardboard for settings and the use of cut-down scenery against a cyclorama as a means of simplifying sets. Further credence is given the above suggestion in the December, 1939, issue of *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, in an article by George R. Kernodle entitled "Farewell to Scene Architecture." Much too much fuss and feathers is made over setting the stage rather than over the play and its characters. However, I do not want to be misunderstood. I do advocate good settings which accent the play and which help to create the correct atmosphere. In coming back to the accompanying photograph, I feel that this setting does the right thing by the play. It is starkly simple but I feel that it is "icebound." The play is so beautifully and simply written that it needs no elaborate set to bolster up its weaknesses. Note the absence of doors. Note the stiffness of the arrangement of the furniture, as stiff as the backs of the characters who occupy the chairs. This set dares to defy usual custom, and I like it for its individuality. I might add that if it is possible to get authentic furniture for the set so much the better. I feel this setting gives the allusion of authenticity which is suffi-



Stage set for Dr. Blank's production of *ICEBOUND*. Acts I, II, III, with entrances Down Right and Down Left.

cient. It certainly is a simple matter finding furniture for this set. It was designed in 1932 by a Junior in the University of Minnesota and highly praised by the student's teacher. The designer is Jonathan Sax.

The costumes can prove as simple. Old-fashioned winter clothes will do. The Jordans are farmers and would wear work clothes. One evening gown is essential, the one which causes the tragedy of disappointment to Jane and brings out the shallowness of Nettie. This gown should be very simple. Frugality should be brought out in the costumes. That is one reason for their out-of-dateness. Dark colors should be dominant.

Jane is the leading lady. She is very neatly but simply dressed. Color combination can be black with white trim or dull plaids. She should be appealing in looks. She personifies charming order. She is never cowed by the Jordans and should radiate character.

Henry Jordan is the head of the house, late middle age with shaggy beard. He can be beardless if you have an actor who can be convincingly middle-aged without the aid of make-up. He could wear overalls or corduroys tucked into old high-topped boots. He would have on a heavy flannel shirt, shiny black vest and coat. He'd wear a macintosh and heavy cap.

Emma Jordan, his wife, would be in dark, heavy-weighted clothes, almost touching the floor. She would have straight hair, be thin-lipped. She would wear a heavy cape or coat, a fascinator or shawl, or she might wear a man's coat.

Nettie, daughter by another marriage, is a flapper. She is silly and cheap. She is ashamed of her station in life and tries to dress above it, only appearing the more shallow by contrast. She is a flirt and very vain. She wears cheap jewelry, and tries to get away with rouge and lipstick but doesn't quite dare because of her parents' disapproval. She would probably wear a brightly colored sweater and plaid skirt. Her outdoor coat might be a dull brown and her hat a cheap felt.

Sadie Fellows, formerly Sadie Jordan, is a widow and dressed in black. She is tall and sharp looking, wearing a long, full dress. She would wear a veil over a felt hat. She could wear a shawl or fascinator with her heavy winter coat.

Ella is the unmarried Jordan. She is a dressmaker and is more up-to-date. She could wear a blouse and skirt combination in black and white or in dark green and black. Her hat would not represent the height of fashion but would be in better taste though very simple. There should be a discordant note in her dress to show that she did not have the best of taste.

Hannah, the elderly servant of the Jordan family, should be in cast-off clothing. Her dress would be a faded gray or black, long and decidedly old-fashioned. Hannah was played by Edna May Oliver on

Broadway, which fact should give a hint as to her type. She is comedy relief in many situations. She is satirical and no fool.

Dr. Curtis and Judge Bradford should look professional, very neatly and simply dressed in rather old-fashioned business suits. No character in the play should represent the very latest fashion. Oxford gray would be a good color for one and a lighter gray for the other. Of course they would wear heavy overcoats and caps or slouch hats. I suggest sticking to winter caps. Mufflers would be good for these two men. These men could wear mustaches or beards.

Orin, the little boy, could wear short bloused trousers, but, better yet, trousers cut straight at the knee. He could wear a white shirt and little bow or flowing tie. He could wear a coat to match his trousers or wear a slip-over sweater. It would be better if the sweater buttoned down the front, I believe. He would have a cap with ear protectors and could wear a macintosh. He would look as though his mother had attempted to keep him dressed up.

Jim Jay, the deputy sheriff, would wear heavy boots, heavy dark trousers or corduroys tucked in them, dark flannel shirt displaying badge, heavy black coat or macintosh and cap. He could wear a heavy and shaggy dark beard.

Ben Jordan, the male lead, having just returned from prison would appear very shoddily dressed. He should look as though he were not warmly enough clothed. He could have on the usual work costume described above.

If a director is giving this play in a region where real winter exists, costuming this play will prove simplicity itself.

The play is drama. It is vari-colored in spite of the drab general atmosphere. There is comedy relief, the curtain scenes are theatrically effective, and the play has sure-fire audience appeal.

Choosing the Festival Play

(Continued from page 13)

Size of cast and distribution of major roles should also be given careful attention. The popular tournament play has not less than three and not more than ten members in the cast. The average seems to be a play with five or six characters. Not much can be done with a play that has only two characters, and the majority of teachers seem to have difficulty in casting and directing a play which has more than ten. Of course, if the characters are of a minor nature the problem may not be so great. Some teachers make the mistake of choosing a play which has roles ideally suited for one or two students whom they consider "tournament material." They are convinced that their choice of students will carry the play through. The ideal contest or festival play has a balanced cast, affording acting opportunities to all who appear in it. The

winning plays are always those in which all parts, minor as well as major, are well done. A few years ago the writer saw a tournament play in which the teacher-director had deliberately changed the lines so that her star actor would do most of the acting; the minor players spoke only now and then or just stood on the stage to complete the scene. The play ran for forty minutes. The one main character spoke almost continuously during that time. It was evident to all present that after the first eight or ten minutes, the student was just reciting lines. The physical strain was too much for him. Not even a professional actor would have had the stamina to carry on. A tournament play must not demand too much of any one player. The audience must feel that the performance is the effort of a group of players working harmoniously together to produce one major dramatic effect.

Attention should also be given to the length of time required for the performance of the play. Most tournament rules specify the time limits for each performance. These limits run from twenty to forty-five minutes. The average is thirty minutes. Some tournaments disqualify a play that does not observe the time limits, while others place a penalty on the performance.

Teachers are notoriously poor readers when they are asked to read instructions. Those who do not read carefully often turn up with surprises on their faces when they are told that they have not followed the directions given in the rules. It is extremely important, therefore, that the rules be read carefully. Restrictions which apply to the time limits of each performance, time allowed for tearing a set, type of plays which may be entered, plays which are not eligible, properties which may be used, etc., should be noted carefully by the teacher-director.

A few words should be said about the qualifications of the teacher as a play director. The majority of plays which win high honors in play tournaments are invariably the products of teachers who have mastered most of the tricks of the competent director. This is proved by the fact that these same teachers always present plays which rank high. It is true, of course, that often a competent teacher is prevented from doing her best work by circumstances beyond her control. However, in too many instances the teacher is betrayed by glaring examples of poor directing on her part, revealing a lack of knowledge of some of the most elementary tricks of directing. It is essential, therefore, that each teacher, when she takes up the problem of choosing a suitable tournament play, give some attention to her own qualifications as a director. Certain teachers are temperamentally better equipped to direct a serious play. Others can do better with a comedy or fantasy. Each teacher should know her own special abilities and limitations, as well as the abilities and limitations of her students.

The Technical Director's Page

by LESLIE ALLEN JONES

Lecturer, Extension Division, Brown University, Providence, R. I.

The Basket Grate

THE coal, or basket grate, seems to belong in a definite era of stage settings. I see the basket grate, in conjunction with the brass rail or fender, an indispensable part of *Sherlock Holmes* for instance. And it belongs with a definite type of mantel or fireplace such as an ornate marble affair. It is at home in any Victorian stage set.

To build a basket grate for stage use as little expense as possible—that is what I propose to talk about. We shall need a variety of materials, most of which can be found around the home. First we shall determine the size of our fireplace opening—matching it to a stage mantel we might have in stock, or building it to such an average size as to render the completed prop most useful. About one foot wide and twenty inches long and a foot high—these rough measurements will do.

Corner posts are made of two-by-two stock. One-by-three batten stock is used for the bottom frame, which is built like a picture frame. Study the drawing in my sketch. Fasten this frame to the inner side of the corner posts. Now, get a piece of wire screening and make a box of it about eight inches high and of a size to fit the inside opening of our bottom frame. It might be a good idea to stiffen the corners with wire from an old coat hanger. The back of this wire box is of wood—so that we may have a solid piece to

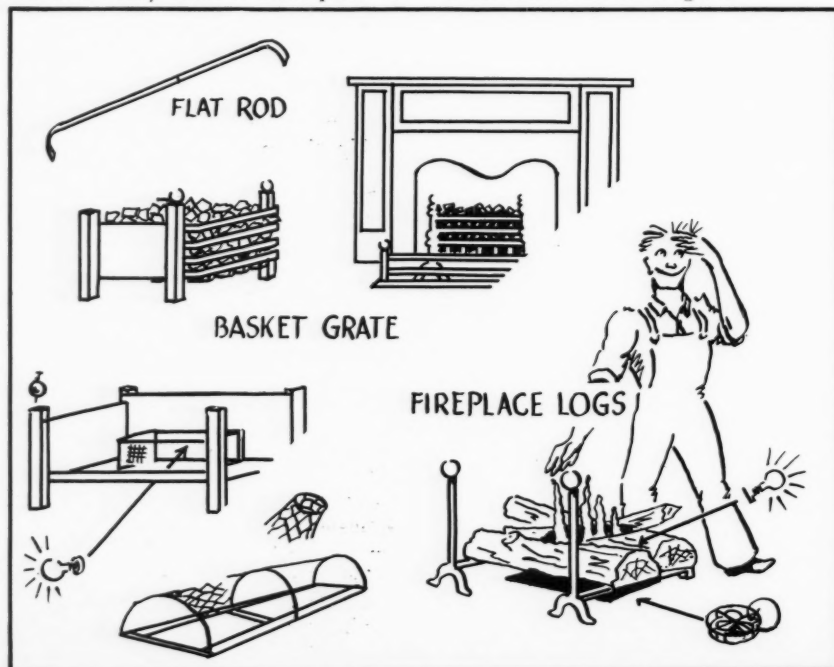
fasten an electric light socket in place.

Light boards are used on the three sides of the frame to form ends and back. I suggest box boards or, if we are to be fancy, plywood.

You see our coal grate is pure fake, and the larger the wire basket inside the grate, the less amount of coal simulating material we will have to use.

Now for the front—those shiny brass bars. Use flat brass curtain rods. Tramp them down flat, and then bend the ends to fit to the inside of our front by bending around an iron pipe. Fasten with small screw and don't forget to bore or punch holes in the bottom bar to take the lower bars of our grill. These lower bars may be left out entirely, and the whole business may be painted black if the brass bars are out of keeping with your setting. I suggest that the black you use as paint be Ivory Drop Black, mixed with glue and water. Then, if the brass work is desired at a later date, a sponge dipped in hot water will remove the black color. If in painting the black paint has a tendency to crawl on the brass rod, it is because the metal still is slightly greasy—a rag dipped in vinegar will remove and neutralize this condition.

The ornamental balls on the top of the front posts are simply old golf balls with a nail driven through them. Any small rubber ball will do as well. Paint black or with gold bronze radiator paint (mix in shellac) and they will add a professional look to the basket grate.



A light socket is fastened to the back board of the inside box—see the drawing—and any type bulb can be used. About forty watt will be right.

Now for some fun—break some old bottles in a box, to get pieces two or three inches in size. And save the necks of the bottles, as they fill space beautifully. Dye these pieces of glass by dipping them in a solution of lamp dye. If you cannot purchase any of the regular lamp dyes, add diamond dyes to thinned shellac, or melt in a double boiler some old scraps of gelatine color medium. Perhaps you may even be lucky enough to find some bottles of the desired color. I suggest deep reds, ambers, old blues—have in mind the glowing of a coal grate—even a deep green glint here and there is permissible.

The wire box may be partially covered with scrap gelatine or cellophane and the bottle necks are filled in around the sides. Larger pieces of glass are placed in the front. Do not hesitate to wire them into place if desired. It may take you some time, but I am sure you can make a glowing coal basket with a little moving around of pieces. A small brush filled with black paint may be used to deaden around the edges if your fire seems too bright. A good effect in some cases may be made by attaching the lamp to a dimmer circuit that will enable the fire to glow brightly at times, then dim. In order that your dimmer may take down the lamp it may be necessary to hook it up in series with other lamps—but your electrician will know about that. Just don't let him do what one did to me once—this misbegged gentleman put a flasher button in the lamp socket of a basket grate, and the coal fire winked steadily and rapidly like an electric sign!

Fireplace Logs

IF I had to have a roaring log fire on the stage I would strive to place it on one side wall or the other in order that I might gain the effect by light alone. And if I had a large fireplace on the back wall that did not have to be lighted, I would use real logs. But if a fire on the back wall was needed these fireplace logs would fill the bill. They are a lot of fun to make, and I have seen them, made in small sizes, covered with asbestoes, used as heaters in fake mantels with the light socket filled with an electric heating element.

Study the drawing and you will see that the framework of each log is made of chicken wire over a wood and wire form. Stubs of branches can be modeled separately and fastened into place with wire.

For covering, new or old scene cloth is used. It is dipped into hot glue and dropped on the log frame. Allowed to lie much as it has fallen, it will, when dry, give the corrugated bark effect you desire. Painting should be done only after a close study of burning logs. The gray ash, the blackened checkered charcoal, all can be easily reproduced by the brush. A

good plan, if your logs do not look rough enough, is to mix a little sawdust with the paint that acts as the first coat. One can even put moss on the bark with shredded steel wool dipped in glue.

The flames are something else again, and depend for effectiveness on the way the logs are piled on the hearth. They are simply streamers of orange and red silk sewn in place, and unless motivated by an electric fan will not be noticed. Once again, if the noise of the fan is an objection use a rubber tube and a bellows. The fan should be run on a dimmer so that the flames will flutter and fall. A light bulb underneath a log can make a pretty effect, more especially if certain sections of the log covering are cut out to be replaced by colored silk or gelatine.

Most wire logs are wired in one heap together, and sometimes, for ease in striking, they are firmly fastened to the andirons.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

...find it necessary to organize a technical crew...appreciate any information you can give us for making this technical organization into a well trained and highly efficient group.—W. B. E., California.

THE most important thing in a stage crew is its spirit—and spirit is something you cannot find in any book. It comes from an honest desire to do the best by any show. Sooner or later problems are settled by a mounting tradition—and you hear the cry of “that’s the way we do it here.”

You will find chapters and tables on organization in a book, which though expensive should, in my own opinion, be in every theatre group’s library. The volume costs ten dollars and is called *Scenery for the Theatre*, by Burris-Meyer and Cole.

On my question and answer page in the OCTOBER THESPIAN you will find a question relating to furniture handling which might help you in your crew organization.

While I hate to mention my own two books in the same breath with *Scenery for the Theatre*, you will find chapters in both of them that will perhaps aid you in grasping your problems. (Walter H. Baker Co.)

There is one other thing I might tell you—know where you are going before calling your crew. Have your settings plotted and sketches made, so that each man can grasp the idea that here is a thing to be done.

A good carpenter will call his crew about him, lay the plans on the table, tell them “here’s the way we want it”—and then ask them for suggestions. Out of such a meeting will come many good ideas—but none would come unless there had been something *there* in the first place to start talking about.

The best of luck to you—why not drop me a line at the close of your school year?

Please advise me how to produce the sound effect of a sputtering and backfiring motorcycle.—D. H., Kentucky.

A SMALL electric motor (about one-third or one-quarter horse) is your best bet. Place the motor on the edge of a table, so that when you tie a short piece of clothesline around the pulley it can whirl in an unobstructed circle. Take a tin pan, basin, or any other tin container. With the motor at speed, bring the pan bottom slowly into the whirling rope. It will give you a humming roar that will vary in tone as you move the pan about. You can stick the pan into the way of the rope and get a sudden burst of sound. I’ve found a one-gallon tin can best for airplane effects, and I think a good motorcycle roar could be made with a five-gallon oil tin with the top cut off.

For the backfire, I suggest a blank cartridge pistol, or starter’s gun—or a large firecracker in an empty ash barrel.

You divide your noise into parts, and putting them together gives you the desired effect. First, a clink, clank, as the starter is worked. Drag a fork down the side of a cheese grater—while holding the grater against the side of an empty ash barrel for resonance. Better yet, take a screwdriver and punch a lot of holes in one side of your empty oil tin—then try dragging the screwdriver down the corrugated side.

First the clink, clank—then a bang—followed immediately by the roar of the motor—then another pop—a sputtering roar—then silence followed by the repetition of the starter clink.

...has some money available to curtain our stage...have even considered making them but we don’t know just what overhead apparatus should be provided...—L. G. Nebraska.

...hoping to buy scenery for our stage soon and would greatly appreciate any suggestions you may be able to give us. Would making scenery be practical?—K. H. W., Kansas.

THESE are parts of two letters recently received and answered by myself. The letters were much more specific than these printed passages might lead you to believe. I do use letters in this column, but frequently quote only parts. L. G. from Nebraska mentioned several firms that make curtains and inquired if I knew of others, and K. H. W. of Kansas told me the amount of money at present available in her organization and asked about scenic studios.

Now it is not my policy to boost any firm in these pages. I do, from time to time when the occasion warrants, speak for my own books, and for any other book that I think worth while. L. G. has

the name of several good drapery manufacturers and in my letter to her I spoke of some that have done good work for me in the past. I have no hesitation in speaking frankly in answer to your letters when you request a personal reply, and I will mention firms and prices to the best of my ability—but let us keep this Question and Answer Page free from any suspicion of plugging a particular theatrical firm.

K. H. W. of Kansas was told to go ahead and build scenery by all means. The cost of such scenery as she desired was way above her stock of available money. Scenery prices are high—but there is a reason for the difference in cost of manufacture of ordinary scenery and the purchase price of ready built and painted settings. Perhaps I can explain that last remark a bit. Amateurs use unbleached cotton sheeting for scene cloth. Professional builders use a special flameproofed light weight canvas or duck. Amateurs use the butt joint for fastening with corner block and keystone—professionals use mortise and tenon joints. Amateurs rarely pay for professional painting, or for professional construction—and scenic studios must use costly union labor in all departments.

I believe scenery should not be kept un-touchable—but that it should be built and rebuilt, cut and patched, altered and renovated for each performance. So, unless you have lots of money in your organization, have the fun—and the headaches—of building and painting your own. I often think how lucky the scenic artist is in the theatre. The actor, once the play starts, is on his own—he cannot recall a speech. But the builder and painter can rework and repaint mistakes. Nothing venture, nothing learned—let us build our own!

... an effect of fire offstage, visible through the window only as a reflected glow.—V. M., N. Y.

Divide an offstage noise into parts. This always turns out to be a good rule, for the sounds we hear and identify as a single noise are always made of several separate and distinct noises. We will suppose that this fire is a burning building far enough away so that only the background glow will reflect through the windows.

Take a flood lamp with a red gelatine color medium. Station one man beside it with a cardboard fan or shield. He is to pass this over the face of the light slowly and not in any regular pattern. This will cause the fire to rise and fall. Two or more people can break little sticks—surprising how these crackling twigs will give the pop and crackle of flames. They should keep up a subdued mutter of excited talk. Then there is the hum, or the arrival of engines. You can add or subtract to these noises to fit your play. But divide a noise into parts and put these parts together to get a good sound effect.

Motion Picture Appreciation

Edited by HAROLD TURNEY

Chairman, Department of Drama, Los Angeles City College and Author of FILM GUIDES to Films of 1939-40, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois*, *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex*, and other motion picture study plans.

Best of the Robinsonnades

By DUDLEY CHADWICK GORDON,
Instructor of English, Los Angeles City College.

WHEN the 19th Century was young, while Germany's Golden Age shone with its greatest lustre, an unknown Swiss pastor published in Zurich in 1812 a really great book, *Der Schweizerische Robinson—The Swiss Family Robinson*—to you. It has appealed to the young spirit ever since.

Owing much to *Robinson Crusoe*, the author contrives a thrilling story dealing with the varied experiences of a shipwrecked family consisting of a Swiss pastor, his wife and four sons, who, deserted by the captain and crew of the vessel upon which they were sailing, finally reach a desert island in safety. By means of a series of ingenious acts that would put an Eagle Scout to shame, they put to use everything that comes to hand. Food rescued from the ship or obtained on the island provides subsistence. Their experiences with wild beasts and in providing shelter and clothing present a startling record, but so enjoyable do they find their new and adventuresome life that when the opportunity to return home is afforded them they prefer to remain in their primitive environment rather than to return to civilization.

Little did the originator of the first Robinson realize that his masterpiece based upon the very human qualities of acquisitiveness and ingenuity would set in motion a whole flood of back-to-nature books. Upon publication it was translated widely and soon a host of talented authors were issuing works in the same new vogue. In Germany alone Saxony, Silesia, Thuringia and Swabia each had its Robinson family living abundantly amidst primitive adventure.

Undoubtedly, the best of these Robinsonnades, as the French called them, is the *Swiss Family Robinson* by Johann David Rudolph Wyss. It has been translated into all of the European languages and after a century and a quarter it is still in demand by legions of readers of adventure stories.

Since the *Swiss Family Robinson* was left in an unfinished condition by the author, many writers have felt the call to try their hands at bringing it to a conclusion. Most successful of these gliders-of-the-lily is a Mme. de Montholieu. She apparently obtained permission from Wyss' son to alter and expand the end of the story. Her additions were faithful to the original and we may still say that "As an exercise for the improvement of

knowledge and ingenuity for children, the *Swiss Family Robinson* is entirely fit for use."

English-speaking people owe a debt of gratitude to William Godwin for it was he who had the *Swiss Family Robinson* translated into our language. The great social philosopher went to the original German version as his source and it is believed that the poet, Shelley, assisted with the translation.

The Robinsonnades are entitled to a proper niche in the halls of literary development. As modern novels of adventure they dealt a deathblow to the fantastic heroic novel of the French gallant type and paved the way for a natural and healthier development of the novel of today.

A glance at a list of some of the better known Robinsonnades will reveal not only an extensive international interest in primitive adventure, but also that authors of considerable reputation have employed their talents in this medium. For example, here are a few:

Emile: Jean Jacques Rousseau
Masterman Ready: Captain Marryat, R. N.
English Family Robinson: Mayne Reid
Canadian Crusoes: Catherine Traills
Arctic Crusoe: Percy St. John
The Crater, or Vulcan's Peak: Fenimore Cooper
The Mysterious Island: Jules Verne
The New Swiss Family Robinson: Owen Wister

Of Johann David Rudolph Wyss (d. 1818) little is known other than he was pastor and almoner, or almsgiver to the Swiss troops in Berne, Switzerland. Having read Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* he created the story of *Swiss Family Robinson* for the enjoyment of his children. His son, Johann, put the story into print and has since been credited with its origin. The younger Wyss, as professor of philoso-

phy, and later librarian at the University at Berne, had honors aplenty. He wrote three volumes on the Idylls, Folk Songs, and Legends of Switzerland, as well as books on history and travel, but it is to his father that we give credit for creating the great children's classic. It is believed, too, that the father wrote the Swiss National Hymn, *Rufst du, mein Vaterland*.

Of this we may be certain, that despite competition from such noted authors then living in Germany as Kant, Schiller, Goethe and the brothers Grimm, together with Heine, Hegel, Schopenhauer and others, Johann Wyss, the unknown pastor in Berne, gave the world a book that is read more frequently today than any volume by the literary titans of his time.

Swiss Family Robinson in 1813 and 1940

By RICHARD G. LILLARD,
Instructor of English, Los Angeles City College.

THE adaption of *Swiss Family Robinson* for the screen 128 years after it was first published called for far-reaching and significant changes. Gene Towne and Graham Baker in rewriting the story and Walter Ferris in transposing it into the form of the screen play had to change a story for children into one of general interest for moviegoers. They had to make a yarn flavored with the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries have interest in the twentieth century. With the different techniques of literature and the film in mind, they had to reduce almost 600 pages into a neatly unified tale. In all, they had to modify the theme, mood, characterization, setting, and plot of the original. The result is an artistic motion picture in place of a rather artless verbal narrative.

The outspoken theme of the book is moralistic. Through such virtues as courage, hard work, foresight, humility before God, careful book study, and family loyalty the two Robinsons and their four boys are able to obtain security and comfort on their tropical island. In each chapter the family offers thanks to God, cooperate in agricultural tasks, or cleverly find uses for the animals and plants of the island. In a lyrical mood the book extolls thrifty middle-class ideals. The reader must be interested mainly in what the Robinsons do and what they find on the island. He must enjoy learning a great deal about natural history and primitive handicrafts.

Where the reader is concerned with what the Robinsons do to the island to make it habitable and useful, the member of the film audience is interested in what the island does to the Robinsons. The film script, in order to appeal to modern audiences, concentrates on an idea never developed in the book—the constructive values in personality, with solving the basic problems of civilization for oneself. Here is a theme easily personalized in living character. The result is a psychological drama.

The theme of the film, for which William Robinson, the father, is the spokes-

The Cast

William Robinson.....Thomas Mitchell
A wealthy merchant.
Elizabeth Robinson.....Edna Best
His wife.
Jack Robinson.....Freddie Bartholomew
The fashionable son.
Fritz Robinson.....Tim Holt
The military son.
Ernest Robinson.....Terry Kilburn
The literary son.
Francis Robinson.....Bobbie Quillan
The baby of the family.

The Staff

Producers..Gene Towne and Graham Baker
Director.....Edward Ludwig
Photographer....Nicholas Musuraca, A.S.C.

man, is that European society in Napoleon's time is "rotten to the core," "men are using all their energies to destroy one another," civilization is something to get away from if men are to be men, and the colonies, Australia, where the Robinsons sail for, or the unknown island where they are shipwrecked, can be a place for fine, clean living—"a Paradise! This is a new world unspoiled by man." Americans can respond to this theme as they remember their vanished frontier and now wonder, during depressions and wars, how to work out a happy life for all men.

Developing this theme in terms of people the film writers create characters where Johann Wyss only introduced vague non-dramatic types. Wyss's Mr. Robinson is always resourceful, is incredibly versatile at doing things with his hands, and is as learned as a whole college faculty on the flora and fauna of a place where he has never been before. "Mother" Robinson is always the Swiss *Hausfrau*, woman. The three oldest boys, fourteen and younger, are in turn manly and intelligent, gentle and self indulgent, and high spirited. From the start all of these are perfectly happy on the island. They never have any spiritual problems and their characters do not change during the whole ten-year period. As people they are static.

The film persons are dynamic and are correspondingly interesting. William Robinson is made an intelligent home lover, critical both of the life his boys are leading in England and of his wife's artificial aspirations in society. In his island experiences he is shown as a man who can be hurt and diverted from his ideal but who can win in the end through sheer strength of character. To contrast with him and furnish a dramatic conflict of will through the picture, Mrs. Robinson (Elizabeth) is completely changed. She is a high-society wife, fascinated by the Beau Brummel life of giddy fashion in London, impractical, embarrassed that her husband is in trade as a watchmaker, capable only of refined playing on the spinet. She is very slow to see anything likable in the primitive existence on the island and apparently will never be fully happy there. The older boys are made into young men. They can be played by experienced film actors instead of juveniles, and they are more interesting because more individualistic. Jack is a fop, fussy in his dressing and concerned with marrying for money. Fritz is a self-satisfied soldier eager to kill men for Napoleon. Ernest is a "priggish little bookworm" who thinks only of a polite education at Oxford. Under the influence of their island environment their personalities and characters gradually develop, affording one of the major interests of the film, so that eventually William can say, "They improve with every day. They are working hard without complaint. They are growing self-reliant. And they are not thinking of themselves all the time . . ."



Scene from the RKO photoplay, *SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON*, adapted from the book of the same name.

The plot itself was the main task facing the film writers. The conspicuous episodes remain: The overwhelming sea storm, the desertion of the crew, the marooning of the family on the ship, the escape to land in a raft made of casks, the hardships of the first night of camping out, the building of the tree house, the first salvage expedition. These lend themselves to film treatment and are vividly realized in detailed sequences. In the depiction of the storm, for example, there are flashes of sailors, the officers, the Robinsons as the storm blows up. There are miniatures of the brig, closeups of waves and of mouths calling orders, and a rapid montage of scenes on deck and in the Robinsons' cabin. Numerous visual and auditory details objectify the chaos and terror of the catastrophe much more fully than Wyss's words do. Water washes the captain over the rail. Waves lift the ship and drop it on the reefs with a resounding crash.

The multitude of parallel events on the island had to be drastically cut and left only implied or wholly omitted. The many explorations, hunts, food-getting expeditions, and pleasure excursions are reduced to one brief sequence. The botanical wonders of the island are but hinted at in references to pomegranates and sugar cane. Of the three permanent habitations the Robinsons built only the tree house, Falcon's Nest, remains. The numerous trips to salvage goods from the brig are reduced to one; and the wreck, instead of lasting for some months, breaks up instead in less than two days. The elimination of all these details keeps the picture from being a pointless and miscellaneous adventure story and makes it a tightly organized dramatic story.

The straightforward presentation of the theme made necessary a whole new sequence of material: the opening scenes in London. A sign makes clear that William came from Berne in 1800. In his office William contracts to go as a colonist to Australia. In the drawing room of his house he staggers his wife and sons with the announcement that all their fashionable ambitions must be cancelled, as they must pack at once.

Unifying the plot of the film is the conflict between William and Elizabeth over their departure from England. This spiritual struggle is dramatic, as is nothing in Wyss's pageant of family concord, and it has psychological intensity when hardships and dangers on the island and the taunts of his family cause William to feel responsible for a great mistake and temporarily to suffer painfully.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How does the music add to the psychological effect during the montage of the two boys discovering the rescue ship?
2. Why does the film omit the adventures with the agouti, elephants, the whale, the boa constrictor, etc.?
3. How does the film contrive to suggest briefly the manifold activities of the Robinsons as settlers and farmers?
4. Does any of the dialog sound theatrical instead of natural?
5. Compare the psychological mood of the two scenes in which the family group around the spinet in the tree house.
6. Why are the two storms in the picture more effective than the storms in the book?
7. What information is given without spoken words in the opening sequence?
8. Why is the mother in the book unsuitable for a leading role in a stage or screen version?
9. Discuss camera angles, montage, sound linkage, and music in the sea-storm sequence.



With the Radio Editor

This page is published for teachers and students interested in radio activities at the high school level. Readers' comments and suggestions are welcomed.

Edited by G. HARRY WRIGHT

Drama Department, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio



"SO you're stuck for a radio program?"

"And how! I'm not only stuck, Mr. Wright. I'm desperate."

"Tell me about it."

"Well, all semester we've used scripts furnished by our teacher—except for a few plays and comedy skits that the kids have written—and now out of a clear sky Miss Johnson says that we have to write and produce a complete half hour program. Gosh, I don't mind the production part, but writing it—well, that's got me stumped."

"Have you tried anything at all so far?"

"I've tried a dozen things. First I started to write a play. Then I started a question bee script. They both sounded silly, so I tried to write a variety program—and that sounded dumbest of all."

"Why do you think they sounded so dumb to you? Were they any worse than the scripts you have been using?"

"No, I don't think they were any worse. Oh, I don't know, they just sounded so much like all the others. There was nothing new about any of them. Everybody writes plays, and everybody does quiz programs. What's left? Nothing. What I need is an idea."

"Bill, you may not know it, but you've hit upon the greatest problem facing radio today—not only your High School Workshop, but professional radio as well. Radio needs program ideas—new ones, fresh ones. Sit down here, and listen to a lecture on the subject of 'The Program Idea.'"

"By 'program idea' I mean the basic plan or theme upon which the program is built. It is a newly discovered idea for catching and holding the interest of a listening audience. No radio program can be a real success unless based upon a program idea that is sound. And, of course, the newer and fresher the idea is, the better. For program ideas go stale and wear out, just as everything else does that is used too long. That's one of the great troubles with commercial radio today—there hasn't been a good new program idea for a long time. And the old ones are all beginning to wear pretty thin."

"So your problem, Bill, is exactly the same as the one facing the networks and the big radio advertisers today—finding a new, clever idea around which to build your program. Find that, and the writing will come comparatively easy. The trouble with most people—including you, as your opening remarks revealed—is that they just sit down and try to write a program,

without first working out an idea that is good. Naturally, the resulting program is uncertain, wobbly, and pointless. And that won't do in this day and age. Once it would, but it won't any more."

"You see when radio first started, Bill, there was no need for program ideas. There was not even any need for a program. The mere fact of hearing noise coming from hundreds of miles away through a set of headphones was enough thrill to hold the listeners. But as radio improved and the novelty of the toy wore off, listeners began to demand real entertainment."

"And so was born the program idea."

"The first ideas, of course, were very simple. Nearly everybody likes popular music, so the first program idea was to fill the air with tunes. But Americans like comedy too, so the next idea was to add jokes to the tunes, and so song-and-patter programs of the Gene and Glenn type became standard. Then somebody thought it would be a good idea to build up these programs to half or full hour length, fortify them with outstanding personalities, and add short dramatic skits. This idea blossomed in time into the variety show, with name bands, and headliner comedians and actors. Next came the use of plays long and short, followed closely by the dramatic serial, radio's most over-worked idea."

"Other ideas came tumbling through the air in the form of new programs. Quiz programs, man-in-the-street programs, audience participation programs (Professor Quiz, Vox Pop, Battle of the Sexes, Information Please, Grouch Club), 'Common Folks' programs (Barn Dance), children's programs, cultural programs (Ford Sunday Evening Hour, Metropolitan Opera), news commentators (Lowell Thomas, H. V. Kaltenborn)—all these and many others came into the picture, each one as a result of a program idea which at the time was new."

"But these ideas are no longer new. In fact they are all rather shopworn. Right now radio is ripe for a new program idea. There hasn't been a real one since the audience participation idea was developed several years ago. The variety hour, the

serial drama, the quiz program, and all of the other standard forms have been worked to the point of boredom on a long-suffering public; and radio is facing the same problem you are, Bill, in needing badly a new program idea."

"There are only five things that you can do on the radio. You can talk, sing, whistle, play a musical instrument, and give imitations. The amount of whistling and giving imitations that you can get away with is pretty small, so that limits you almost entirely to talking, singing, and playing musical instruments. And your problem is to think up a new and clever idea which will use one or more of these basic tools to make a program which is fresh and interesting. Quite a large order."

"You bet it is. I guess I'd better start over and put on the thinking cap for a while before I sit down to the typewriter."

"Right. Remember that all the technical rules in the books about how to write scripts—such as number of characters, use of pictorial words, describing the action in the dialogue, and all the others—mean nothing until you have figured out a good basic idea that will make human beings want to listen."

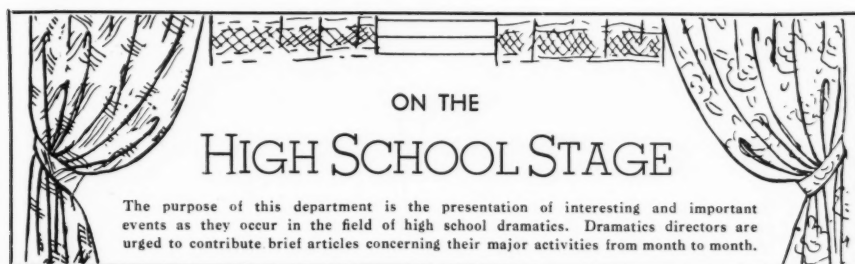
"The other day in our workshop a boy came in with a program idea which may not be new, but we had not encountered it before. He chose two groups of contestants from the studio audience—three in each group. He related to one group the opening situation of a short play, then told them to step up to the microphone and finish the play, without script, without direction, and without being told how he had intended to finish the play. They were given three minutes. Then he gave the second group the opening situation of a second play, and had them finish it in the same way. The group which did the best job of finishing its play was declared the winner. It was a good program idea, and resulted in a very amusing program. That boy worked for days on the idea, but the writing required only a short time."

"Try for a new idea. If you want to write in the field of the drama, try to work out some new use for the dramatic situation, or try to use a new technique in telling your story. Think of new things to dramatize, things that have not been dramatized before. Today we are dramatizing history, art, medicine, biology, and one high school group I know is on a coast-to-coast network dramatizing safety. There must be many fertile fields that radio drama has not yet touched. It's your job to find them. They may furnish not only one program, but a whole series."

"Gee, thanks. I'll try."

"Good. Remember, this is not only your problem. It's the problem of radio. Who knows, the next program idea to sweep the nation may come from a High School Radio Workshop. The author may even be Bill Jones."

Do you want to keep in touch with new developments in Commercial Radio? Educational Radio? Do you want to know when important new program series are being inaugurated? Then write to the following and request that you be put on their mailing list:
Public Relations Dept., National Broadcasting Co.,
R. C. A. Bldg., Radio City, N. Y.
Columbia Broadcasting System, New York.
National Association of Broadcasters, National Press Bldg., Washington, D. C.
National Committee on Education by Radio,
1 Madison Ave., New York.



Platte City, Mo.

Two performances of booth Tarkington's *Penrod* as dramatized by E. E. Rose were given on December 5 and 6 at Platte City High School, with Billie McComb directing. In addition to the large number of students who had parts in the play, many others were active on the production staff. Thespian Troupe No. 194, with Miss Wilma L. McComb as sponsor, was formally installed at this school in December. Seven students formed the charter roll.

Longview, Texas

Peg O' My Heart was given on November 24 as the first major production of this season at Longview Senior High School, with Miss Ethel Kaderli directing. *Ladies in Waiting*, the second full-length play of this season, followed in December. One-acts given during the fall semester included *In the High Places*, a peace play for Armistice, *The McGoogle's Thanksgiving* and *The Enchanted Christmas Tree*. Special projects for this year include the installation of a new public address system and the purchase of a victrola and voice-recording machine. Members of Thespian Troupe No. 282 are taking an active part in the year's dramatic schedule.—*Jack Smaha, Secretary.*

Cheney, Wash.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 267, with Miss Irmal J. Kenneson as the new sponsor, have tentatively decided on *The Night of January 16* as their first long play of this season. Thespians were responsible for the production of the one-act play, *Thank You, Doctor*, given as part of the school carnival program in November. A National Thespian display for the high school exhibit was shown at the Northwest Catholic Conference.—*Margaret Van Brunt, Secretary.*

Clarksburg, W. Va.

Sister Mary Immaculate, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 355 at St. Mary's High School, has scheduled four major plays for this season. They are *Anne of Green Gables*, *Growing Pains*, *Spring Fever* and *The Joyous Season*. One-acts which are being given this year include *Five for Bad Luck*, *Telephone Number One*, *Thank You, Doctor*, *Knave of Hearts*, *Hyacinth on Wheels*, and *Americans All*. Thespians are active in writing original one-act plays and assisting with the sponsorship of the junior dramatics club in school.—*Marcelline Coyne, Secretary.*

Stambaugh, Mich.

The Ghost Flies South opened the season of full-length plays on December 15 at Stambaugh High School (Thespian Troupe No. 215). The production was directed by Miss Helen Dunham, Troupe Sponsor. Other activities of a dramatic nature for

this season include a special "Pep" Stunt during the football season, the dramatization of the *Wizard of Oz* during Book Week, and a group of one-act plays tentatively scheduled for production during National Drama Week.—*Otto J. Sartorelli, Secretary.*

Switchback, W. Va.

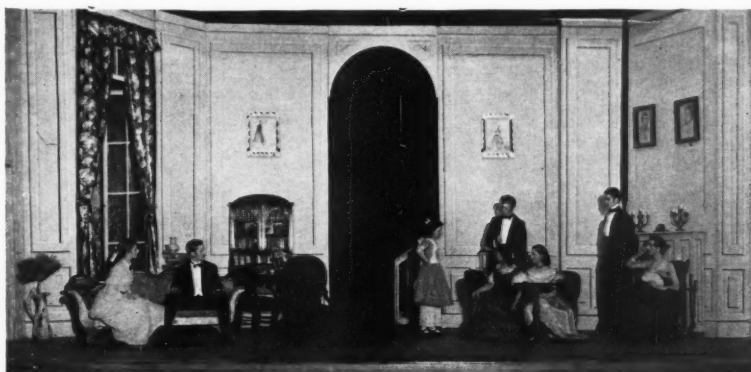
For their first long play of the year, members of Thespian Troupe No. 206 at Elkhorn High School produced *So We'll Just Pretend* on November 30, with Miss Gertrude E. Skaggs directing. Plans for this year call for the production of at least one one-act play each month for assembly. Thespians are especially active in raising funds to purchase stage equipment.—*Elanor Beckner, Secretary.*

Marked Tree, Ark.

The present season is a busy one for members of Thespian Troupe No. 301 at Marked Tree High School, with Mrs. Marie Thost Pierce as sponsor. Activities began with a Halloween program of three one-act plays, *The Mistake*, *Getting Ready for a Visit* and *A Spooky Halloween*. A pageant, *Hiawatha*, followed on November 21. For a special Christmas program on December 22 four one-act plays were given by the high school classes. The freshmen gave *Who Gets the Car Tonight?* the sophomores, *Sauce for the Gossings*, the juniors, *Kid Kapers*, and the seniors closed the program with *A Christmas Surprise*. The first long play of the year was given by the junior class in January. Other activities for the season include a local Thespian drama contest in February, a County Drama Festival to be held at Marked Tree High School in March under Thespian sponsorship, participation in the district drama and debate contests at A. & M. College, Jonesboro, Ark., and the senior play in May, which will bring the season to a close. Local recitals by speech pupils are held at this school every six or eight weeks.—*Helen Schroeder, Secretary.*

Akron, Ohio

Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer* opened the present season of full-length pro-



Scene from the production of *JANE EYRE* at Indiana State Laboratory High School, Terre Haute, Indiana. Prof. Robert W. Masters, director. (Thespian Troupe No. 378.)

ductions at Garfield High School (Thespian Troupe No. 77). The play was given on November 1, with Mr. Alex Wilson directing. Fall activities also included the production of two one-act plays, *War Presents* and *Saved*. The Christmas season will be observed with a pageant on December 17. *Seven Keys to Baldpate* is tentatively scheduled for production the latter part of January. A special project for this year includes the making of a fifteen-minute movie on make-up and one on department-store advertising in which Thespians are participating. Thespians are also sponsoring two weekly broadcasts.

Bloomsburg, Pa.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 158 are devoting much time this semester to monologues and reading plays, as well as helping with the major plays. The season began with the full-length play, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* in November. Mrs. Harriet H. Kline has charge of dramatics and Thespian activities.—*Joan Magee, Secretary.*

Welch, W. Va.

Miss Eleanore E. Reed reports that through the interest developed by her Thespian Troupe, Welch High School has for the first time in its history a full year course in dramatics. The class is limited to seniors who have made a "B" average in their junior year. Members of the new dramatics class will receive credit for their work as the equivalent of the fourth year English. The text-book, *The Play Book*, by Ogden and Carter, is being used.

Plans for this year call for the production of full-length plays, several assembly one-act plays, a Christmas play, original skits for assembly programs, and participation in the tenth annual high school drama festival for West Virginia sponsored by the National Thespian Society.—*Jean Blakely, Secretary.*

Dallas, Texas

The senior class play, *Professor, How Could You?* was presented in December 8 as the first major play of this season at Sunset High School (Thespian Troupe No. 216). At least eight one-act plays were given during the fall semester, four of which had Thespian casts. Mrs. Wanda Banker, Thespian Regional Director for Texas, is in charge of dramatics.—*Kitty Chalk, Secretary.*

Big Timber, Mont.

Two performances of *Comin' Thru the Rye* on November 30 and December 1 opened the season of full-length plays at Sweet Grass County High School, with Miss Callie Allison directing. Early in November a puppet show was sponsored. Plans for this year also include exchange programs with the high schools at Livingston, Bozeman and Billings, the production of an All-Thespian three-act play, and the study of theatres of the world. Thespians sponsored a school "Mixer" on December 15 for the purpose of raising money.—*Ellen Ward, Secretary.*

Middletown, N. Y.

Three performances of the popular play, *Growing Pains*, were given under the direction of Mr. Miles S. McLain at Middletown High School on November 15, 16, 17. The one-act play, *Dust of the Road*, was presented as part of a special Christmas program. Other activities for the fall semester at this school included the production of one-act plays for school assembly programs and the presentation

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of radio plays. Thespians are making preparations for the annual forensic one-act play contest and the reading contest.—*Agnes Abkarian, Secretary.*

Laredo, Texas

Jean Muller and Lee Jones played the leading roles in the Thespian production of *Spring Fever* at Martin High School (Thespian Troupe No. 138) on November 21. The play was directed by Mrs. F. S. Jessie, Thespian sponsor. Other dramatic activities of the fall semester included the presentation of a special program at Carrizo Springs High School under the direction of Mrs. Travis Bruce Bunn, and a minstrel show presented by the Laredo Lions Club, with Mrs. Jessie directing the program. Honorary members of the Thespian club at this school include Alice Leary, Mr. and Mrs. Leyendecker, Mr. F. S. Jessie and Panchito Jessie. Three new members, George Mayes, Edward Russell, and Joaquin Benavides, became member of the club during the fall semester of this year.

Bramwell, W. Va.

Monthly meetings are being held this year by members of Thespian Troupe No. 137 at Bramwell High School, with Miss Shirley H. Foster as sponsor. Twelve new members were added to the Troupe late in October.—*Anne Scruggs, Secretary.*

Rocky River, Ohio

The well-known play, *Icebound*, by Owen Davis, opened the present dramatic season on December 2 at Rocky River High School (Thespian Troupe 65). The production was directed by Miss Edith A. White, Troupe Sponsor. Plans for this year also call for the production of an operetta, an original Talent Night program sponsored by the Junior Class, and the senior class play to be given during the spring semester. A number of one-act plays are also being given as part of the year's dramatic schedule. Thespians are active in all phases of play production. New stage equipment is being added this year.—*Martha Ann Thompson, Secretary.*

Plentywood, Mont.

The Junior Class gave *That Girl Patsy* on November 17 as the first long play of this year at Plentywood High School (Thespian Troupe No. 360), with Miss E. Winifred Opgrande directing. A special event early in October was the trip made by the entire membership of the Troupe to see the Passion Play presented by the famous Leunen Players of the Black Hills, with the world-renowned Joseph Meier in the role of the Christ. Thespians sponsored a special Christmas program for the community in December. Among the one-acts being given for assembly programs are *Be a Little Cuckoo*, *Yes Means No*, and *Willie's Lie Detector*. Much attention is being given this year to the study of make-up and improving lighting and stage equipment.—*Margorie Nelson, Secretary.*

Cristobal, Canal Zone

Cristobal High School opened its present season of long plays with the production of Walter Hackett's *Captain Applejack* on December 15. An evening of one-acts including *Spreading the News* and *Nine Lives of Emily* was given on November 10. The fall semester also included two special assembly programs.—*H. P. McCarty, Secretary.*

Montrose, Colo.

Among the first important events to be observed jointly by members of the newly established Thespian Troupe No. 383 and the Masque and Sabre Club of Montrose County High School was the Masque Ball held in the high school gymnasium on October 25. Miss Louise Bertagnolli has charge of dramatics and Thespian activities.

PLAYS

BY

PAULINE PHELPS

• •

Miss Minerva and William Green Hill

A Comedy in Three Acts

A Dramatization of Frances Boyd
Calhoun's Beloved Book

5 m., 6 f. Int. The characters are: William Green Hill; Jimmy Garner, a boy of his own age; the neighbor girls, Frances and Lina; Miss Minerva and the Major (her lifelong admirer); Cecelia Case, the prettiest young woman in the town, and Maurice Richmond, her former sweetheart, and Bert Ravenal, her present one; Mrs. Garner, Jimmy's mother; and Sarah Jane, a fat negress, who furnishes more than her share of the comedy. Royalty, \$10.00. 75c

Little Women

4 m., 7 f. 1 simple int. A three-act dramatization of "the most popular girl's book ever written in America," Louisa Alcott's work is beautifully preserved and the four "little women" faithfully portrayed, as are also the other important characters from the beloved novel. We believe this is the only dramatization of this story offered without royalty, and there is only one setting. If desiring a play with charm and audience appeal, send for a copy of Pauline Phelps' "Little Women". It challenges comparison. The only requirement for the first production is the purchase of 10 copies of the play. Repeat performances, \$2.50 each. 75c

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

A Comedy in Three Acts

Has been acclaimed "one of the best plays for high school students ever read or seen on the stage." 8 m., 6 f. Scene, the living-room of Aunt Polly's home. 2 hrs. All the charm of the story and the important characters are transferred to the play. The fence whitewashing scene, Tom's love affair, the finding of the stolen treasure, in fact, all the favorite adventures are there, and the dialogue is Mark Twain's very own. A number of good characters for both sexes—Aunt Polly, Becky and Amy, the feminine leads; important male roles; Tom; Huckleberry Finn; Sid; Alfred, Tom's rival; and Jim, the colored boy. The only requirement for the first production is the purchase of 10 copies of the play. Repeat performances, \$2.50 each. 75c

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CALLING ALL GIRLS, 3-act comedy. 4m. 8w. 35 cts.

Orrville, Ohio

Running Wild, a three-act mystery by Glenn Hughes, was staged on December 8 as the Senior Class play at Orrville High School. The play was directed by Mr. P. K. Howells. Under Mr. Howells's supervision Thespian Troupe No. 387 was formally installed at this school late in January of this year.

Bloomington, Ind.

Three full-length plays and twelve one-acts were produced during the 1938-39 dramatic season at Bloomington High School (Thespian Troupe No. 142). The long plays included the Dramatic Club production of *Life Begins at Sixteen*, and the two Senior Class plays, *Wings of the Morning* (fall semester) and *The Whole Town's Talking* (spring semester). The year also included an evening of one-acts, *Knave of Hearts*, *Taps*, and *Orchids for Marie*, staged in February as a guest night for the Dramatic Club. The majority of the other one-acts produced during the year were given at meetings of the Dramatics Club. Members of the Troupe were awarded a rating of Superior with the play, *Taps*, in the Indiana State Drama Festival held at Terre Haute on February 10, 11, with Max Coan receiving the honor of best boy actor in the state. Mrs. Laura G. Childs is director of dramatics and Thespian sponsor.

Canton, N. Y.

Miss Mary Ella Bovee, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 259 at Canton High School, writes that her school won the cup for the best play given in the Northern New York League at Malone, New York. The winning play was *Swamp Spirit*, by Lealon Jones. Several members of the cast were given individual honors for the best performances in the tournament. This is the third time in five years that Canton

BEST THESPIANS

The names of the following Best Thespians should have been included in the Honor Roll for the 1938-39 Season:

Howard Piche, Troupe No. 311, Lancaster, N. H., High School.
Max Coan, Troupe No. 142, Bloomington, Ind., High School.
Elrose Maquar, **Leon Withrow**, Troupe No. 325, El Centro, Calif., High School.
Maurine Summers, **Bob Brown**, Troupe No. 148, San Bernardino, Calif., Senior High School.

has won the cup in this event. The Christmas Season this year was observed with a special program.

Ulysses, Kansas

Dramatics clubs which are unable to plan a satisfactory and worthwhile program of activities for the year will do well if they write members of Thespian Troupe No. 37 of Grant County Rural High School for a copy of the interesting programs they have planned for their troupe this year. Bound in an attractive though inexpensive booklet in the Thespian colors of blue and gold, are semi-monthly programs devoted to the history of drama of foreign lands including that of Greece, Rome, Spain, France, Norway, Germany, Russia, Ireland, and England. Dates for the year's special programs are also listed. This lively group of Thespians is directed by Mrs. Kathleen H. Wheeler.

River Forest, Ill.

Miss Frances Young, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 306 at Trinity High School, re-

ports a schedule of three full-length plays for the present season. These include the play, *Bethlehem*, by Lawrence Houseman, on December 18, *Tish*, on February 5, and *The Merchant Gentleman*, scheduled for production in March. One-acts being given for the Dramatics Club and assembly programs include *Three Pills in a Bottle*, *The Dear Departed*, *Slippers of Cinderella*, *The Happy Journey*, and *The Hole in the Wall*. Special projects include the creative dramatization of *Macbeth*, attendance at a number of current stage hits which will appear in Chicago during the year, and interviews with directors of Little Theatre groups. Thespians are devoting their meetings to the study of the history of drama, with emphasis being placed on this year's series of "Great Plays" given by the National Broadcasting Company.

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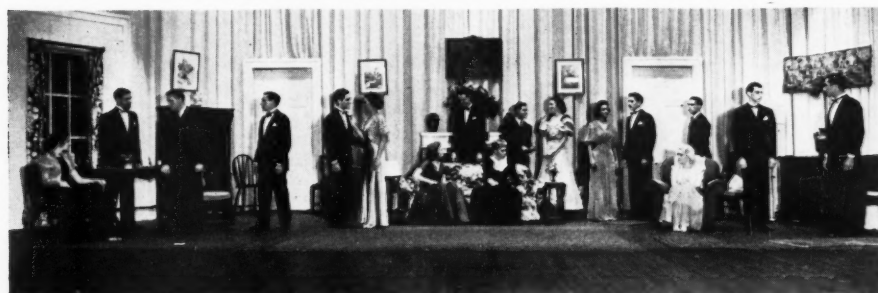
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Scene from George Savage's play, *BALMY DAYS*, given by the Junior Class (1938) at Lemmon, S. D., High School. Helen C. Movius, director.

Wellsburg, W. Va.

Hans Brinker or The Silver Skates was the first of the full-length plays scheduled for production during the fall semester at Wellsburg High School (Thespian Troupe No. 372). Miss Iva G. Brashear reports a very successful production of this play on October 27. The second major play of the semester was given early in December. The Christmas season was observed with a production of Dickens' *The Christmas Carol* on December 20. This same play was given at the Women's Club on December 14. Plans for the spring semester call for the production of some one-act plays in February and a group of one-acts to be given in the spring under Thespian sponsorship. Plans have also been made for this school to participate in the tenth annual West Virginia High School Drama Festival sponsored by The National Thespian Society.—Irene Hall, Secretary.

Weirton, W. Va.

Miss Ella P. Harbourt, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 6 at Weir High School reports that her Thespian activities began early in the fall with a "Bacon-Bat." "Thespians ate wieners, bacon, and marshmallows to their heart's content" writes Miss Harbourt. The first important production of the season was given early in November. The old-fashioned "Mellar-drammar" *Deacon Dubbs*, was presented to an appreciative audience which included members of the Wellsburg, West Virginia, High School Troupe as special guests. Members of the Wellsburg Troupe acted as judges for the best characterization of the show, the prize, a Thespian pin, being awarded to Roy Briscoe as the Deacon.

Cincinnati, Ohio

Laurance C. Worcester's mystery drama, *Cat O'Nine Tails*, was produced on December 8 at Western Hills High School (Thespian Troupe No. 286), with Mrs. Vesta H. Watson directing. Plans for the spring semester call for the production of several one-act plays, including *Highness* and *Three's A Crowd*, and participation in the annual drama festival for southwestern Ohio sponsored by The National Thespian Society.

Lemmon, S. Dak.

Lemmon High School (Thespian Troupe No. 83) entertained the District Declamation Contest on November 22. Dramatics activities began early in October with a minstrel show, *The Cotton Club Cafe*, given on Homecoming Day. *Guess Again* was staged by the Junior Class on December 12. Several one-act plays are tentatively scheduled for production during the spring semester. Miss Helen Movius has charge of dramatics and Thespian activities.—Hilda Haman, Secretary.

State College, Pa.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 175 at State College High School were active in all phases of production of the play, *Galahad Jones*, presented on December 15, 16. Thespians also entertained the 12th year assembly on November 31. A one-act play was presented. Thespian meetings are being held twice a month this year. Special projects for this season call for active participation in the regular drama appreciation and high school theatre classes, the production of a contest play in the spring, a program of one-act plays to be sponsored by the Juniors in the spring, and the all-school operetta which will be given sometime in February. Thespians are devoting some time to improving the stage sets now available.—Robert Glenn, Secretary.

Wetumpka, Ala.

Thespians of Troupe No. 125 at Wetumpka are meeting every two weeks this year and actively assisting with the publicity of the schools play productions. Special attention was also given during the fall semester to the matter of securing scenery for the new high school stage. Among the important dramatics activities of the fall semester were the radio program presented on October 18 over a station in Montgomery, Alabama, a special Thespian chapel program, and the production of the full-length play, *Superstitious Sadie*, on November 23. Miss Margaret Hogan directs dramatics and is sponsor for the Troupe located here.—Onzell Canfield, Secretary.

Norfolk, Nebr.

Janey's One Track Mind was given on November 28 as the first of the full-length plays planned for this season at Norfolk Senior High School (Thespian Troupe No. 112), with Mr. Donley F. Feddersen directing. Two one-act plays, *The Fatal Quest* and *The Cocklefeifer Case*, were given as part of the program for the high school variety show, the Orpheum, on October 20th. The Christmas Season was observed with the performance of a one-act play given at convocation. Members of the Radio Players Club broadcast monthly over station WJAG of Norfolk. During the spring semester Thespians will take part in a P. T. A. radio program featuring a dramatic serial on the first Sunday of each month. Thespian Night, which will include the production of either a long play or a program of one-acts, will be observed on February 10. Mr. Feddersen has expressed much satisfaction with his Thespian troupe for this year and reports that it is the most active group in recent years. He writes, "we are working hard and expect to make real gains for the Thespians and for all dramatic activities here this year."—Elizabeth Adkins, Secretary.

THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

War, W. Va.

Three Days of Grace was produced on November 14 as the major production of the fall semester at Big Creek High School. The play was directed by Miss Floy Gamble, who sponsors Thespian Troupe No. 260 at this school. Members of the troupe were active during the Christmas season in raising funds for the dramatics department.—*Dorothy Branson, Secretary.*

New Berlin, Ill.

With Miss Maida Rettberg as the new sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 188 at New Berlin Township High School, the present dramatic season opened on October 27 with the production of the three-act play, *The Family Doctor*. Thespians are devoting much time to the reading of modern plays.—*Dorothy A. Horn, Secretary.*

Tuscola, Ill.

Two full-length plays were given during the fall semester at Tuscola Community High School (Thespian Troupe No. 180) under the direction of Miss Margaret Leak. The season began on October 20 with a performance of the play, *Her Step-Husband*. The second play, *Take My Advice*, was presented by the junior class on December 1.

Fairview, W. Va.

One Mad Night was produced on December 1 as the first long play of this season at Fairview High School, with Miss Mary Sturm directing. One-acts given during the fall semester included *The Inn of Return*, presented as an assembly play, and *Why the Chimes Rang*, given for Christmas with the school Glee Clubs participating. Thespians are active in the study of various phases of play production, including lighting, make-up and costuming. A study is also being made of the lives of famous dramatists.—*Mary Jane Dalin, Secretary.*

Colfax, Wash.

Growing Pains, staged by the Junior Class on December 8, was the first long play of the present season at Colfax High School (Thespian Troupe No. 329). The play was directed by Miss Mabel Howard, Troupe Sponsor.—*Bernice Benton, Secretary.*

Missouri Valley, Iowa

With Mr. D. A. Liercke as the new sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 179 at Missouri Valley High School, Thespians gave the full-length play, *Spooks*, on November 2. Gloria Satterlee, an outstanding member of the troupe, played the leading role. Miss Satterlee attended the summer session at Northwestern University, where she studied speech and dramatics. The second major play of the fall semester, Moliere's *The Doctor in Spite of Himself*, followed on December 15. Plans for the spring semester call for the production of one-act plays in February, the best one of which will be entered in the county play festival, which will be held at this school. Thespians are also active in various social events being sponsored in conjunction with dramatics, and are following with much interest the Broadway theatrical season.

Miami, Fla.

Dramatic students of Miami Senior High School (Thespian Troupe No. 327 with Mrs. Rochelle J. Williams as sponsor) have two special projects for this season. One calls for better publicity among the students in school and the other calls for increased attendance at the regular school play productions. *The Great Christopher Bean* is included in this year's production of major plays. The Dramatics Department will also assist the Music Department with the production of the operetta, *The Pirates of Penzance*. The one-act, *Dust of the Road*, was presented at a special program in December planned in observance of the Christmas Season.—*Jane Knight, Secretary.*

Omak, Wash.

Members of Thespian Troupe No. 113 at Omak High School began year with Robert Everett as president and Muriel Harriman as secretary. Eight members are in the troupe at present, with Miss Alice Williams as the new sponsor. Thespians will sponsor the senior class play which has been scheduled for production early in February. Several one-acts will also be produced during the spring semester.—*Muriel Harriman, Secretary.*

Victoria, B. C.

British Columbia, with a population scarcely over half a million, has now eighty-six high school drama clubs. These are affiliated with the B. C. School Drama Guild, which is sponsored by the School and Community Drama Branch of the Education Department. These school clubs are encouraged to enter plays in the District Drama Festivals of which there are fifteen in British Columbia.

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A scene from *THE BISHOP MISBEHAVES* as given by the Senior Class at Colfax, Wash., High School. Directed by Miss Mabel Howard.

Morristown, N. J.

Miss Annice K. Johnson, sponsor for Troupe No. 166 at Morristown High School, writes that the first long play of the year for her school will be presented early in February. An operetta will follow late in April. Several one-acts are being given at special matinee performances this fall. Thespians are active in producing, directing and managing these matinee performances. Morristown High School has classes in make-up, play directing and stage technique.—*Beatrice Taylor, Secretary.*

Bluffton, Ohio

Robinson Crusoe was given on November 27 as the first full-length play of the year at Bluffton-Richland High School (Thespian Troupe No. 169), with Mr. Paul W. Stauffer directing the production. The one-act, *Proposal by Proxy*, was given at a special Thanksgiving assembly program. Much interest is being shown by students in the recording machine recently purchased. Thespians are cooperating with the art department in producing marionette shows.

Liberty, N. Y.

The Kauffman and Connolly stage hit, *To the Ladies*, was staged on November 10 as the first long play of the year at Liberty High School. Miss Ethel R. Rice, sponsor for Troupe No. 109, directed the production. The fall semester also included the production of one-act plays for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Plans for the spring semester call for the production of three one-act plays to be presented in the Duso Dramatic League, the study of make-up and production of several student-directed plays. Thespians are planning the production of a full-length play in the spring.—*Hannah Passow, Secretary.*

Bellevue, Ohio

Much attention is being given this year to the study of interpretation, pantomime and make-up at York Centralized High School (Thespian Troupe No. 18) under the direction of Miss DeJane Babione. The one-acts, *Grandpa Goes Hunting* and *He Troups to Conquer*, were given before P. T. A. meetings during the fall semester. Thespians are active in promoting better and more dramatics throughout the school.—*Catherine Yerger, Secretary.*

Manistee, Mich.

The present dramatics seasons at Manistee High School (Troupe No. 73) will consist of one or two full-length plays, an operetta to be given in May, a pageant, five or six one-act plays, three of which will be *Boy Meets Family*, *Dominate 'Em* and *Where the Cross is Made*. Thespians are given the privilege of managing the school store, which affords them good business training. Plans are now under way to purchase more state equipment. Miss Kari Natalie Reed directs dramatics and Thespian activities.—*Barbara Wellman, Secretary.*

Polo, Mo.

With Miss Elizabeth Pinkerton directing, *High Pressure Homer* was given on October 27 as the first long play of the year at Polo High School (Thespian Troupe No. 351). Dramatic activities began early in September with the production of the one-act plays, *The Rose Garden* and *Suppressed Desires* as assembly programs. A third one-act play, *Progress*, was given for the benefit of the student body on November 10. Thespians are taking the leadership in the activities of the regular dramatic club.—*Ronald Wilbur, Secretary.*

Cicero, Ill.

Dramatic activities for the fall semester at J. Sterling Morton High School (Thespian Troupe No. 309) included a Mother-Daughters Banquet on November 17, a P. T. A. Open House on December 12, an Intra-Mural Speech Tournament on December 2, the production of the one-act plays, *The Clod* and *The Travellers*, before the Morton Dramatic Association, a Christmas play, and two radio plays, *The House on Halsted Street* and *The First Spark*. The first important event of the spring semester will be the Annual Speech Banquet, to be held on February 21. Miss Helen G. Todd has charge of dramatics and sponsors Thespian activities here.—*Ruth Coggeshall, Secretary.*

Clayton, Mo.

John Bladerston's *Berkeley Square* was given as the sixth annual major production of the Clayton High School Dramatic Guild on October 27. The production was staged by Mr. Blandford Jennings, sponsor for Troupe No. 322, with Arline Zillman assisting. A large number of students served on the various committees which made up the production staff.

Knoxville, Iowa

Major events of the fall semester dramatics program at Knoxville High School (Thespian Troupe No. 209) were the production on October 25 of the popular play, *Skidding*, and the operetta, *H. M. S. Pinafore*, on November 29. Thespians were active in the construction of a new set of indoor-scenery. Miss Helen Casady has charge of dramatics and sponsors Thespian activities.—*Florence Rapp, Secretary.*

Hays, Kans.

Two performances of Glenn Hughes' *Spring Fever* were given in November at Hays High School (Thespian Troupe No. 234), under the direction of Miss Mildred Swenson. The one-act, *His First Date*, was given during the fall semester as part of a series of programs dedicating the new high school building. The Christmas season was celebrated with a pageant on December 21. In addition to sponsoring the productions mentioned above, Thespians are devoting much time to the study of make-up.—*Anna Mae Earl, Secretary.*

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What's New Among Books and Plays

EDITED BY H. T. LEEPER

Reviews appearing under this department aim to help our readers keep up with recent books and plays. They are prepared with the hope that they prove of practical value to our readers.

Row, Peterson and Co., Evanston, Ill.

The Fifth Yearbook of Short Plays, selected and edited by Lee Owen Snook and Evelyn Edens Price, \$2.50. The yearbooks of short plays published by Row, Peterson & Co. are well known to those who are looking for good non-royalty plays for stage and study. This volume—the latest in the series—includes fifteen one-acts, seven comedies, seven serious plays and one semi-serious play. While some of the plays impress us as being better than others which appear in the same volume, they are all good non-royalty material and we recommend the book to all who face the problem of finding suitable one-acts for assembly programs, etc. *Remember the Dawn*, by Blandford Jennings, is in our opinion the best in the book. Very near to it in dramatic worth we place *The Lost Kiss*, by Margaret Douglas; *Tours and Mine*, by Ella Mae Daniel; *The Last Curtain*, by Neal L. Hosey; *Trampled Garden*, by Frances J. Robinson, and *The Miracle of Christmas Eve*, by May Emery Hall.

Samuel French, 25 West 45th St., New York, N. Y.

The Actor Creates, by Aristide D'Angelo. Price, \$1.00. 96 pages. This book is somewhat too technical in the fundamental theories of acting to be very usable in high schools except in very advanced classes and under the guidance of a capable teacher. However, Mr. D'Angelo, an instructor at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, has made it a valuable text for the beginning actor in a serious study of acting. Much in the manner of Stanislavsky's *My Life in Art*, though more easily understood, he deals with the evolution of the character and with the actor's expression of the character through voice, body, etc. The means of achieving relaxation, inspiration and other usually abstract terms associated with creating are also discussed.

June Mad, a comedy in three acts, by Florence Ryerson and Colin Clements. 7 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$25. One interior set. This is a delightful play about young people of high school age, based upon the novel, *This Awful Age*, by the same authors. As stated in the production notes, "the play is the dramatization of several days in a girl's life, when she passes from childhood into womanhood." Penny is the name of that girl and the plot centers around her efforts to play the role of a young woman—she is only fifteen. The humor is genuine throughout and the situations through which the characters move are well chosen. This play suggests several other popular high school hits which deal with the same theme, but it has a flavor distinctly of its own and will prove a very good choice for school groups. It is an ideal junior or senior class play.

Youth Takes Over, a comedy of high school days, in three acts, by Betty Smith and Robert Finch. 10 m., 17 w., extras. Royalty, \$25. This play suggests another one, *What a Life*, which was a hit on Broadway last year and which has since appeared as a movie. Albert Williams is the youth who "takes over," and he finds a real friend in Dr. Pierson, the new high school principal, who soon realizes that the best way to keep Williams out of trouble is to give him some important responsibility. Williams turns out to be quite a capable boy for his age, and the play should enjoy much popularity among high schools. This is a good choice for a class play with a large cast. One interior set. The premiere production was given by Mr. C. B. Ford, sponsor for Thespian Troupe No. 353 at Abilene, Texas.

Sing a Song of Sixteen, a comedy in three acts, by Tom Taggart. 7 m., 7 w. extras as desired. Royalty, \$10. Urged by his son and daughter, Prof. Robinson decides, even under threat of losing his job, to go to Canada to his uncle's funeral. Left in charge of the school's participation in the music contest, his children present Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pinafore* and win the contest, thus saving their father's job. Dramatically, this play is entertaining, easy to cast and amusing in its complications. *Pinafore* may or may not be used at the discretion of the director.

Eldridge Entertainment House, Inc., Franklin, Ohio.

Calling All Girls, a farce in three acts, by Vivian Mayo. 4 m., 8 w. No royalty. Rich Uncle George dictates that his nephew, David, a shy, retiring young man, must marry within six days or lose his favor. George's sisters, with whom David lives, call in several girls to help him make his choice. An abundance of mistaken identities, including an undertaker and the rich uncle, add fun and merriment to this easy farce.

Grandpa's Twin Sister, a farce in three acts, by Jean Provence. 5 m., 5 w. No royalty. Grandpa Hatcher gets into complications galore when he pretends to be his own twin sister to escape all those who want his money. By finally giving the money where it will do the most good, he puts an end to all the odd mix-ups of this very farcical play.

Northwestern Press, 2200 Park Ave., Minneapolis, Minn.

Almost Eighteen, a comedy drama in three acts, by Dana Thomas. 5 m., 7 w. Royalty, \$25. Eddie Barry gains his father's consent to attend a New York school to become a radio singer, if he himself earns the necessary money. Under another name, Eddie enters the contest for essays on Truth, but under his own name he is awarded the prize for an essay he did not write. The family is disgraced, and only the timely return of Uncle George with proper explanations saves Eddie from disaster, giving him the honor due him. Typical teen-age dialogue, true family-life situations, and real "everyday" problems for a plot make this very good, not too difficult high school material.

The Secret Door, a mystery play in three acts, by Robert St. Clair. 5 m., 6 w. Royalty, \$10. Kidnapers find the haunted old farmhouse a perfect hideout until Robert Morley determines to photograph the ghost. He gets his picture, but only the intervention of the Mysterious Man saves his life when he innocently gets entangled in the kidnapping. A slight departure from the usual mystery plot make an interesting variance in this play which is easily adaptable to any stage and presents no difficult casting problems.

Baker's Plays, 178 Tremont St., Boston, Mass.

The Mad Hatters, a farce in three acts, by Kurtz Gordon. 4 m., 8 w. Royalty, \$10. A riotous, merry farce is this story of the mad Hatters. Grandma Hatter allows the Hatter family, Margaret, Joe and their three grown children, three months to prove they are not entirely useless. It is a feverish, hilarious race, with each working in his own field of interest: a candid camera contest, a swimming tournament, production of a play on Broadway, and fishing stories. Though each fails, the unexpected return of Grandma's false teeth saves them from her wrath. Easy characterizations and staging make this a very usable play.

THE HIGH SCHOOL THESPIAN

The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come, a play in three acts, by Charles George. Based on the novel by John Fox, Jr., 5 m., 8 w. Royalty, \$10. This dramatization moves the time of the story from the middle of the last century to the present. Readers of the book will miss the Civil War sequence and many other episodes omitted in order to cut the story down to play length. In the play, Chad, an untutored, mountain lad, is adopted by Major Buford, Kentucky aristocrat. Spurned by the beautiful Margaret Dean and despised by all but the Major, Chad goes back to his mountains. When proof of Chad's kinship to the Major appears, he returns from college to win Margaret's acceptance.

Pickles is Pickles, a comedy in one act, by Vivian Mayo. 2 m., 3 w. Non-royalty. By masquerading as a movie star, Glenn succeeds in getting the wealthy bachelor, Hubert Doty, to consent to Glenn's marriage to Lillian, who is Doty's niece. A light piece that amateurs can produce with ease.

Contemporary Play Publications, 110 West 42nd St., New York.

The Last Word in Make-Up, by Dr. Rudolph G. Liszt. Price, \$3. This is one of the best books on the subject of make-up that has come to our attention. Profusely illustrated, its photographs and drawings are unexcelled by any book we have seen on the subject. Instruction in the art of make-up is given in progressive steps from simple make-up to difficult types. A complete index and a summary in chart form are contained. Complete as it is, the book could have been improved by a more systematic numbering of the pictures and by the inclusion of more definite information on the various brands of make-up on the market. This book is unquestionably worth its price and deserves a place in every school library.

Wetmore Declaration Bureau, 1631 So. Paxton St., Sioux City, Iowa.

Miss Minerva and William Greew Hill, a comedy in three acts, by Pauline Phelps. 5 m., 6 w. Non-royalty. This play is rich in the fun and humor of the *Miss Minerva* books for young folks by Frances Boyd Calhoun. Miss Minerva, a prim, cantankerous, but lovable old maid, takes her dead cousin's boy, shabby, uneducated, warm-hearted William Green Hill, into her home to live. The mischief he and his friends get into is appalling. Finally, however, his recovery of Miss Minerva's stolen money makes him the hero of the hour. Especially good junior high school material.

Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City.

The Devil and Daniel Webster, a play in one act, by Stephen Vincent Benét. 11 m., 1 w., extras. Royalty, \$5.00. This play was produced as an opera recently at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York City. Daniel Webster actually puts one over on Old Scratch himself in pleading the case of Jabez Stone before a jury. For advanced groups.

Make Room for Rodney, a comedy in one act, by Marion Holbrook. 4 m., 4 w. Royalty, \$5.00. An interesting play for amateur groups. Rodney is young, but he succeeds admirably in getting his sister, Phyllis, married to Bill, thereby making it possible for him to occupy his sister's room.

A Question of Figures, a comedy in one act, by Esther E. Olson. 6 w. Royalty, \$5.00. Arithmetic becomes a most difficult subject for the girls who appear in this funny play. Very good material for assembly.

They'll Never Look There, a comedy in one act, by Jean Lee Latham. 4 m., 4 w. Royalty, \$5.00. Each member of the Brown family thinks of some unusual place to hide the Santa suit, only to discover later that someone else had thought of the same place. A delightful piece of comedy that will amuse any audience.

The Dramatic Publishing Co., Chicago, Ill.
"Absalom—My Son!" a play in three acts, by Anne Coulter Martens. 14 m., 7 w. No royalty. A dramatization of the well-known Bible story of Absalom and King David. Although intended for church use, it might

prove to be an interesting experiment for high school. Joab, slayer of Absalom, is here pictured as a man whose love for Absalom is really as great as David's, but whose love of duty comes first. The cast may be made smaller by doubling. Biblical costumes and two simple sets are used.

All Aboard! A class day and commencement play in three acts, by Anne Coulter Martens. 8 m., 8 w., and extras if desired. No royalty if twelve copies of the play are purchased. The plot revolves around an essay contest, the winner of which is permitted to read her essay commencement night. This in turn, permits her to have the title of Flag Bearer, the highest honor of the class. Timid, unselfish Mary, whose parents emigrated from Europe, wins the contest, and snobbish Janet, who had an ancestor on the Mayflower, takes second place. Knowing Mary's timidity, Janet succeeds in making her afraid to come before the audience to read the memorized essay. Janet then takes the honor herself. At the last moment Janet has a qualm of conscience and publicly makes everything all right. The Class Will and Class Prophecy can be inserted into this play. Easy to cast and produce. Suitable for junior or senior high schools.

That Crazy Smith Family! A comedy in three acts by Katherine Kavanaugh. 6 m., 6 w. One interior set. Royalty, \$10. Sensational football player, Tony Smith, has promised his sweetheart, Barbara, that he will attend State College with her when they graduate from high school. Tony's fame as an athlete has spread until one college football scout sends an attractive girl to try to vamp Tony away from Barbara, and to cause him to break his promise. The complications which follow are true to the life of the high school student. Tony's strong-willed little brother and two younger sisters, whose activities frequently upset the loving, although often exasperated, father, offer hilarious sub-plots. The characters are truly drawn; the plot moves smoothly and rapidly. Not Difficult.—*Carl Cummings.*

Denison & Co., 203 N. Wabash Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Local Boy Makes Good. A comedy-drama in three acts, by Robert St. Clair. 6 m., 7 w., several extras may be used, non-royalty. One modern interior setting. A very amusing play, fast moving and suspense well sustained. A local boy who has become a Hollywood star returns with his fiancée, also a Hollywood star, to make a personal appearance in his home town. The temper tantrums of the fiancée bring the boy in contact with a former school mate which meeting eventually ends in romance. The dialogue is good but the outstanding feature of the play is the rapidity with which the action moves. There are several character parts which are interesting. The play offers no obstacles either in staging or casting for the average high school group.

—*Kari Natalie Reed.*

Ivan Bloom Hardin Co., Des Moines, Iowa.

READINGS:

Sacrifice That Failed, The, a scene from the last act of *Winterset* by Maxwell Anderson. To prevent her brother's crime being revealed, Marianne allows her lover to meet death from the enemy. Then to prove her love for him she exposes herself to the same death. 1 m., 1 w., 10 min.

For All Eternity. One dark night on a waterfront, a man and a woman, derelicts from the underworld, meet as they are both contemplating suicide. Solaced by each others sympathy, a faint hope flickers, but fades out as they see the enemy approach. 1 m., 1 w., 10 min.

Death is Kinder, by Dod Ludlow. A new reading in which a grief-stricken father, sitting by the freshly made grave of his little girl relates the story of her sufferings as the family wandered about searching for work. As a non-resident she could not receive hospital care during her illness, but when she died she was buried with every attention, even to the new shoes which she had longed for in life. 1 m., 10 min.—*Helen Movius.*

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The High School Thespian

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Our Periodicals in Review

REVIEWED BY LOTTA JUNE MILLER

Articles reviewed in this department are selected for their practical value to drama teachers and students. These reviews will have achieved their purpose if they instill a desire among our readers to maintain an active acquaintance with the periodicals.

THE TEACHING OF DRAMATICS AT GLENVILLE HIGH SCHOOL, CLEVELAND. By Eugene Davis. *Quarterly Journal of Speech* for October, 1939. While this article is intended primarily for teachers of dramatic arts, it will be of interest and value to all far-sighted, progressive Thespians. Since the majority of high schools throughout the United States maintain dramatics merely as an extra-curricular activity, the outline of the courses of study offered in this field, should be a goal towards which most schools should strive. In addition to two classes in stage craft and one in scene design, there are four classes in acting, one of which is devoted entirely to advanced students. It reads like a dramatics teacher's dream.

THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER. By Morton Eustis. *Theatre Arts* for November, 1939. Not content to be one of the cleverest writers of dialogue, George S. Kaufman took over the direction of his latest hit, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. At the time Mr. Eustis visited the theater, the play had been in rehearsal for only eight days, four of which had been spent sitting around a table, reading. On this day, all three acts were to be thrown together for the first time. What is more, no scripts were used, and the settings were complete.

Another unusual aspect of the Kaufman rehearsal was the fact that he started with the last act first and worked forward. Interestingly enough, each act was so clearly written that the humor was evident without the preceding act. Such a method is an excellent test of the construction of a play.

This is a practical article for all directors to read. It gives an itemized account of how details are worked out in a well-directed show.

A TWO-CENTURY RUN. Shakespeare in America. By Otis Skinner. *Saturday Review* for October 28, 1939. Otis Skinner has written a fascinating review of Esther Cloudman Dunn's book, *Shakespeare in America*. Down on 23rd Street and Sixth Avenue in New York City is a marble base-relief of the great bard and dramatist. This marks the site where the old Booth Theatre used to house some of the greatest actors of the nineteenth century.

Interestingly enough, the history of Shakespeare in America is also the history of the theater in America. Now, as in the early days, the finest actors have held the Shakespearean roles as the goal for histrionic achievement.

You will also be surprised to learn that Abraham Lincoln found a great deal of value and interest in reading the plays of Shakespeare. He especially liked to quote from *Richard II*, the lines beginning, "For God's sake let us sit upon the ground."

THE USE OF PHONOGRAPH RECORDINGS IN TEACHING SHAKESPEARE. By Samuel Weingarten. *College English* for October, 1939. Here we are on the subject of Shakespeare again. While this article was written primarily for teachers of English, it should prove worthwhile to directors and students of the drama.

A wide interest in Shakespeare has been aroused in the past few years due to the several stage and motion picture productions of his plays. A number of recordings are available to assist the student in his interpretations and to clarify further some of the outstanding scenes.

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CHINESE SHADOW PLAYS. By Bertha A. Gardiner. *Players Magazine* for November, 1939. Here is a new phase of puppetry which should be of interest to all lovers of the theater. Miss Pauline Benton, organizer of the Red Gate Players, made a first-hand study of the ancient art of shadow plays in China. With the help of Mr. Robert Youmans, puppeteer, and Mr. William Russel, musician, her troupe has been touring the country presenting these native Chinese dramas for colleges, museums, little theaters, and private schools.

MAKE YOUR OWN STAGE. Play Your Own Play. *St. Nicholas* for November, 1939. If you are interested in children's theater or creative dramatics for the primary grades, you will find this information practical and inexpensive to follow. Directions are given whereby students may construct a cardboard stage and use paper dolls for characters. The students then speak the lines and manipulate their puppets. Accompanying this instruction is a one-act play suitable for such a production.

LEONARDO DA VINCI, STAGE MANAGER. By Tom Squire. *Theatre Arts* for November, 1939. Did you know that the great painter, Leonardo da Vinci, was also a successful scenic and costume designer? Despite his tragic and unhappy life, he did realize a degree of success as a theater artist.

Like his pictures, his sets and costumes had a dramatic quality in color and design. He hated the ordinary and always aimed at the magnificent and the unusual.

His first real opportunity as a stage designer for serious drama came when Beatrice d'Este moved to Milan. Her private theater boasted of the "best equipped stage in the world and a wardrobe of a hundred authentic costumes."

FOOTLIGHT PARADE. By Morton Eustis. *Theatre Arts* for October, 1939. Stand aside, you Thespians, and allow the theatre's great to parade past that you may see and take heed. In the first float comes Arthur Byron, a veteran of fifty years, who in his youth played with the great John Drew and the beautiful Maude Adams.

Now who is this fascinating creature riding the "theatrical chariot" with Noel Coward? It is none other than our "queen of comedy," Gertrude Lawrence who is now playing in *Skylark*.

There's nothing like packing our parade with talent, for here comes our renowned playwright of the Group Theatre, William Saroyan. They tell me that he can turn out a "first rate" show in a week.

And here is the beautiful Tallulah who has at last found a vehicle equal to her talents in *The Little Foxes*. Not far behind rides Robert Morley, England's gift to Oscar Wilde and Marie Antoinette. You know, he is so modest that he claims he owes his success to being a vacuum cleaner salesman.

Last but not least, scampers good old Willie Howard, the boy who gives us all a laugh.

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